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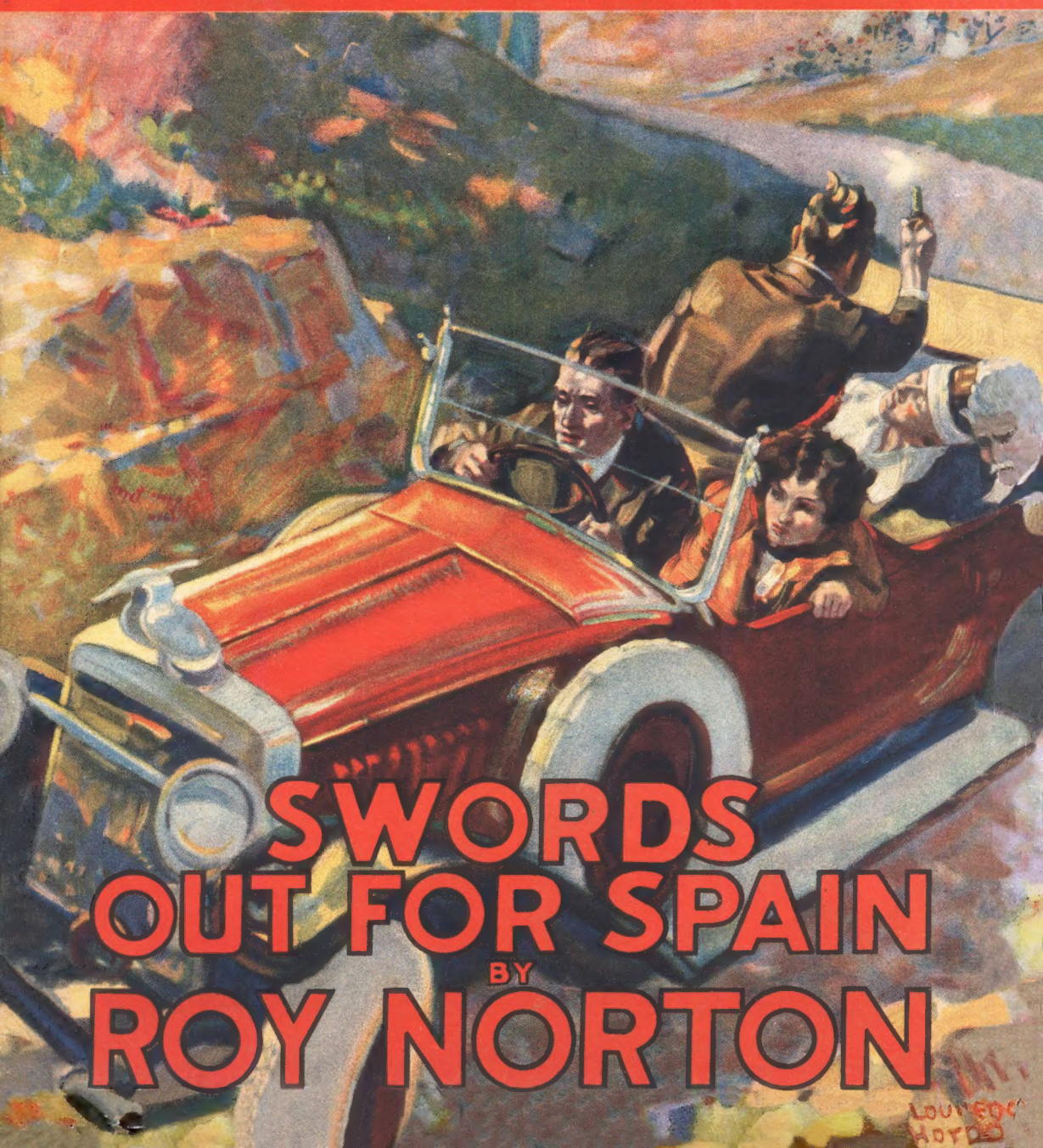
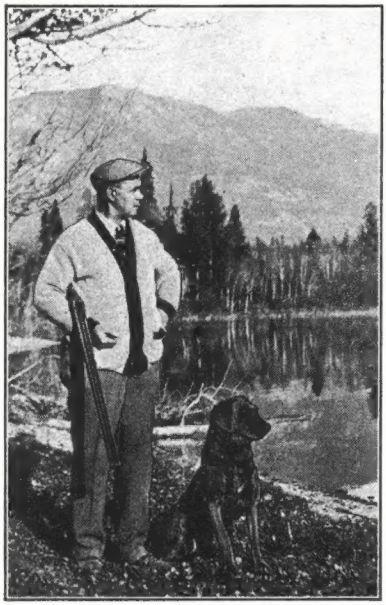


SWORDS OUT FOR SPAIN

BY

ROY NORTON



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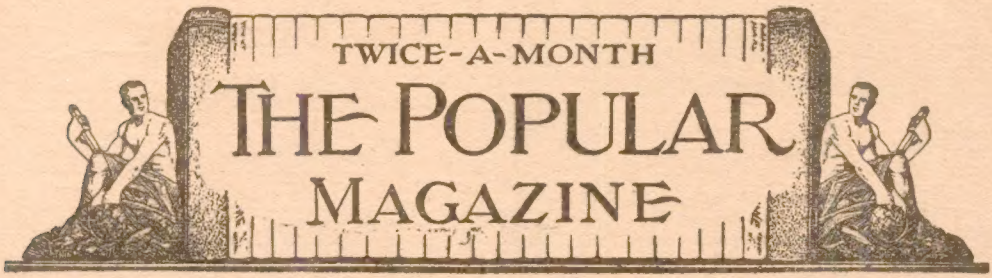

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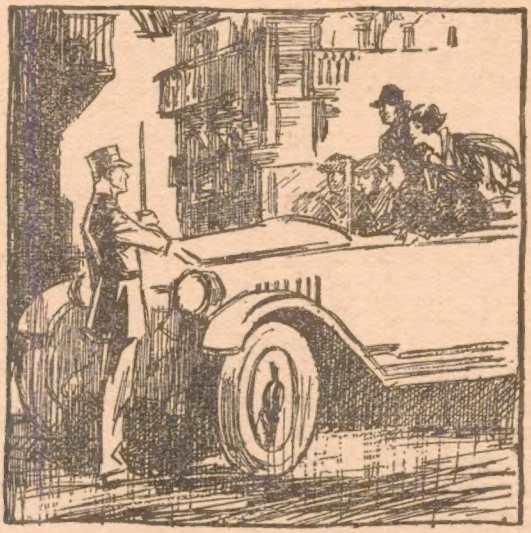


Swords Out for Spain

By Roy Norton

Author of "The Silver Obelisk," "The Crusader's Casket," Etc.

Conspiracy! One must whisper the word, so vast is its portent; one's breath catches at the extent of its malfeasances. In its grotesque, ugly shadow, kingdoms have slipped down the bloody steps of ambition; a Cæsar met his doom; a Serbian plunged the world into a vale of blood and tears. But it is of Spain one thinks. Spain with her black-frocked monarchs, once mighty mistress of the world and its riches! And it is in this selfsame land of Spain, now grown old and feeble, yet still answering to the spark of romance, that the American adventurer John Ives, becomes embroiled in the labyrinthian mazes of a plot to unseat the Bourbon ruler of the Iberian Peninsula.

CHAPTER I.

OUT OF LUCK.

IT seemed to me that for an incredible time I was in a world of dull aches and grinding noises, all of which terminated in a sharp, clamorous halt. Somewhere off in the distance I heard a prolonged "S-s-s-s-sh!" as if some extraordinarily harsh nurse wished me to sleep again. Then, perversely, I sat up and stared into the darkness. My hand went instinctively to my head and my fingers tentatively discovered a huge welt thereon.

It took my dazed senses considerable time to rally and coördinate, then in a flash they clamped together and I was fully alive and reasoning. I felt for my watch. It was gone. Likewise my scarfpin had disappeared. I didn't search for my pocketbook, for the sim-

ple reason that if it had also vanished —whoever took it was welcome; for it had been empty for more than a week. I did regret the loss of the watch and pin, for I had intended to pawn them on Monday to pay an installment on my overdue hotel bill and——

"What day can this be, anyhow?" I mumbled. Then, disturbed by my own voice, I answered myself in thought: "If I was sandbagged on Sunday night when I went for a walk, I couldn't have been knocked out for more than a few hours, so it's Monday morning at the latest. But where the deuce am I?"

MY head ached frightfully, but my wits had by now resumed functioning, and I felt around the sides of my prison and sensed that I was shut up in an empty freight car. I found the door at last, and to my satisfaction it slid open without difficulty. I looked out into the skies and saw that the stars were paling with a promise of dawn, that the train which had brought me as an unsuspected and unpaying passenger was at the border of a tangled network of rails, that a mile or so ahead the still burning street lamps indicated a city of importance, that somewhere not too distant was the sea from which a salt breeze came gently and mingled with its familiar odors the smell of a pine forest.

I knew that I must have come far from Bordeaux where I had been robbed and by my assailants thrown into an empty truck. On the heels of this reasoning came another thought, that it didn't matter much where I was, and that the police forces of the world are very much alike when it comes to handling a penniless man, and the penalties imposed vary only in the number of days on a rock pile. I must escape before the signal which had been set against my train permitted it to proceed into the switch yard ahead.

Up by the locomotive a group of men with lanterns were evidently gossiping. This was my opportunity. Quietly I slipped the door farther aside, dropped to the cinders and, bent double, gained an embankment, slithered down it, climbed a paled fence and found myself in a well-paved highway bordered by fairly pretentious suburban houses that were still swathed in unlighted gloom.

"Halte! Ou allez vous?"

From beneath a street lamp fifty or sixty yards distant, a gendarme started toward me. There was no time to waste. When a stranger, and particularly an American, comes in contact with the French official since the war, he has trouble and annoyance a-plenty, though he be innocent and harmless; because Americans are secretly hated in France and some French officials of these "piping times of peace" could give any of the ancient German *politzei* cards and spades for brusqueness and overbearing.

I saw a vacant space and behind it the pine forest that had not yet fallen to the suburban ax and bolted for it. The gendarme promptly shot, then shouted, and then bethought him of his whistle and evidently tried to shoot, yell and whistle at the same time. He annoyed me. I paused long enough to gather a couple of brickbats and when he neared my corner paid him my compliments. I learned with glee that I hadn't been on my varsity ball battery as pitcher for nothing. The grunt I produced from the policeman was heartening and satisfactory. He broke all records—in the opposite direction!

I passed on into the depths of the pine woods, found a dirt road that led past a turpentine gatherer's camp and decided that it might be best to advance boldly toward that distant city. I doubted if the gendarme would start a search without full reënforcements. And I was right, for I finally gained a broad, well-paved street, and by the

growing daylight found a signpost which informed me that the road to the left led to Bayonne, while the one to the right would land me in Biarritz.

The knowledge was appalling! I had traveled considerably more than a hundred miles from Bordeaux, where I could be at least reasonably certain of food and shelter until I could make some sort of a turn to extricate myself from my temporary difficulties. In Bordeaux there were at least two or three who would vouch for my identity as John Ives, while here on this Basque coast I knew no one—not a single human being.

Moreover, the irony of it was patent in the fact that I was worth—potentially at least—one hundred thousand dollars. Potentially? That necessitates an explanation, inasmuch as in actuality I couldn't cash a check for more than nine dollars and forty-eight cents, the exact amount of my bank balance.

I went through the war with the American forces and therefore I was a hero—back home. I was one of those who helped to "Save France." I was a liaison officer, due to the fact that in my youth I had lived in France for a few years. Wearing all my medals decorously, I had returned to Oklahoma when the A. E. F. had brought the war to a triumphant finish.

IN Oklahoma, having nothing better to do to make a living, I had for a time tried to induce folks to believe that I was an oil geologist and engineer. Astonishing how skeptical these oil magnates become after a few years in the fields! When my father finished a life of hard, honest and unprofitable work, I sold out my modest inheritance and tried to market an invention for deeper drilling in oil fields nearly exhausted.

Failing to get what I regarded as a fair offer from any American firm, I came to London to try to make a sale, and from there to France. My funds sank lower and lower while I held on hopefully for better offers than had been received. Then, but a few days previously, an American drilling outfit woke to the fact that both English and French oil men were investigating the worth of my invention, and I received a cable from an attorney in America offering me a hundred thousand in cash, but with no future royalties.

I had just four dollars left in my pockets after sending a cable declining the proffer, and to make that decision cost me one of the sternest struggles of my life. A hundred thousand is a fortune to one who is broke and in a foreign land.

Now here I was, a hunted tramp, without money to buy food or a shave, with a sore head and at a crossroads pondering a choice of direction. I recalled vaguely that Biarritz is much smaller than Bayonne, a fashionable watering place, and ultra modern. My chances for losing myself, therefore, would prove far better in Bayonne, which is still a seaport although, owing to the formation of bars at the mouth of the River Adour, of much less importance than in the days when it played a part in history.

Furthermore, in this day of officialdom, it would have the Sergents de Ville, or city police, in preponderance, beneath them the ordinary "Trappes" and so on down to the gendarmerie. It must be Bayonne, so toward it I trudged, my chief present concern being that I had no head covering and even on the Cote d'Azure of France a bareheaded man is marked. Perhaps more so than in other places, for the Basque himself is alleged to be born wearing one of his little, flat, rimless, blue caps. He rarely doffs it during life and is buried in it.

I proved this tradition untrue just as I was entering the more thickly popu-

lated outskirts of the city, for it was there I discovered several oxcarts—high-wheeled, lumbering, cumbersome affairs—standing outside a feed yard. In the bottom of one lay a Basque cap. It wasn't there after I passed onward! I had become, to outward appearance, a Basque.

It wasn't much of a cap. It wasn't too clean. But at the moment, I was far from fastidious. It gave me courage to walk bravely past a policeman and I was pleased to observe that all he did was to yawn. I walked briskly as if bound for work. I envied some of those whom I began to meet and who evidently had some place to go. I'd have been glad of a job myself, that morning. I gained the bank of the river and washed my face and hands and felt better. I could have done justice to a breakfast of any kind.

I CAME to the huge gray bridge, the Pont St. Esprit, spanning the River Adour and saw the long string of docks of the Quai de Lesseps which I surmise had once been crowded with shipping; but now there were but five or six rusty tramps at intervals and two or three others, besides, which had the forlorn, deserted, disconsolate appearance that always seems to pervade ships no longer in service. I lounged over the broad stone balustrade watching them and meditating over my own predicament, until a couple of gendarmes going off duty passed behind me, and I felt their steps slacken as they eyed me.

It warned me that at that hour of the day at least I must make a pretense of having some destination, so walked briskly back, discovered a shady little square, the Place St. Esprit, and near by it a railway station. A train had just arrived and a fussy traveler who had been trying to beat down a voiture driver from his demanded price spotted me and opened his mouth as if to call me, then closed it again.

"Got some luggage to carry, monsieur?" I asked, and to my immense satisfaction he said he had and gave me two suit cases that weighed as much as full-grown trunks.

I hoped he wasn't going far, when he said: "To the albergo on the other side. Follow me with them."

It wasn't very far, but to me it was like a mile. When he paid me, I knew why the cabman had sneered at him in contempt; for he gave me but three francs, the equivalent of fifteen cents. I expended one franc on a hunk of bread and the two others on a shave. I have always been more or less improvident. I should have done without the shave! Yet I doubt that I should have been able to wait placidly in front of the American consulate for a time without such cleanliness, because that is what I finally did.

I don't know why it is that every American citizen takes it for granted that every American consul has a bank roll behind him provided by a benevolent government that has millions to spend. The government has—on everything but its consulates and its wandering citizens in financial distress. And, after all, the latter usually deserve nothing. Yet, knowing the consular limitations and being helpless, I made up my mind that if I had to beg, or borrow, it would be from a countryman.

Luck wasn't exactly with me on that day, however. The consul was away on sick leave and his clerk looked hard-boiled. That he wasn't so bad he proved by listening to my brief and abbreviated tale and from his own pocket agreed to pay for a telegram, "a touch," to the only friend I had in Paris. I asked for nothing more and would have passed out uncomplainingly, prepared to fast, had he not suggested that I take luncheon with him. Of course I accepted. Naturally!

After that I had nothing to do all

day long save hope for a reply to my message. I visited the cathedral, with its fine old cloisters, and the great fortifications whose massive gates had been closed for the last time on that day in 1814 when the English army of Wellington battered them down.

There was nothing for me when the consulate closed and I looked forward to a supperless night's rest—where, I hadn't decided. I loitered in the park as long as I dared, then I noticed that the policemen on patrol were beginning to eye me as if suspecting my vagrancy, so changed my base. I trudged back toward the river and for a time paused beneath the frowning statue of Cardinal Lavigerie whose bronze hand, upraised, brought no benediction.

To sleep in a park was evidently impossible, and to return to the open places beyond the city involved the risk of discovery by the patrolling gendarmes who, after the morning's experience, might be on the alert for any tramp, and myself in particular. And then I remembered the moored and rusty steamers at the quayside and thought that possibly one of these might offer a refuge if I could get aboard unobserved.

THE great warehouses were empty and silent as I passed, with the lash of the waters, swift running, turbulent, combative, through the influx of the River Nive, just above—the only sounds. It was comparatively dark, for which I was grateful. Across the broad river shone the long strings of lights in the gayer side of the city.

I passed the first steamers—whose lights aboard showed here and there the idle ones of their crews lounging—and gained the far end of the docks It was quite dark there and I met no one, not even a watchman, until I was near the end, when two men passed me and hearing their steps cease I surmised that they might be curious as to where I was going. With a busy air I turned off the docks as if to gain the higher road, then paused to peer around the corner and saw that, evidently unconcerned, the two men had sauntered onward.

I slipped hastily back and at the far end climbed aboard a ship which seemed deserted. Not a human being was visible on her decks. Not a light shone. I walked back to the companionway and found the door locked. I tried the doors of the deck house with the same rebuff, but, advancing forward, saw that beneath her scant bridge a hatchway was unbattened. I went to it.

A ladder had been left there and proved convenient. I descended it and, at the bottom, struck a match. Save for a few old packing cases that seemed abandoned, she was as empty as a cavern and quite suited for my lodging. I took the precaution to get as far forward as possible and behind a pile of empty and ancient fish crates and boxes that, although somewhat smelly, would afford me a screen in case a watchman came aboard and flashed a light carelessly. There, exhausted from loss of sleep and a day's tramping, I speedily fell asleep.

I must have slept very soundly and couldn't judge how long before I was disturbed by a hollow, booming sound. Startled, I lifted my head and listened. There was a different note in the lapping of the waters against the ship's hull. They sounded less strident. Also, there was a different sense about the craft. Then it suddenly came to me that we were no longer moored to a dock, that we were floating with the swift river current and that perhaps the sound which had awakened me was the closing of the hatch.

I hastily got up, struck a match and moved aft until I came to the ladder and looked upward. There was no longer any further doubt. I was a

prisoner and battened in. Off on a voyage to some unknown destination and—— The very final blow of misfortune seemed to have overtaken me!

CHAPTER II.

INTO TERRIFYING DEPTHS.

I SHOOK the box of matches in my hand, remembering, with a grin, that I had inadverdently stolen it from my host at the luncheon table and, inasmuch as it was my sole possession, was grateful. My predicament might have been much worse, but for that box of matches. In fact, I'm not certain, in the light of later events, that it didn't save my life. Having plenty, I struck another to examine my surroundings. I was somewhat mystified to discover that the packing cases had been covered over with a huge pile of fish nets, dumped carelessly so that they formed a pyramid.

Furthermore, there were several bales of rags that appeared to have been thrown down promiscuously from above. I couldn't think how they had come aboard, unless they had been on the after deck and had not been discovered by me when I made my casual stowage. I wondered if it were possible that other cargo had been taken in and, if so, why in the darkness of the night?

I groped aft in that gloomy cavern and found it empty. I might have returned to my nest to sleep had I not felt the urgent desire to get off the ship; but just then another sound reached me, the muffled clang of a shovel that betrayed the fact that steam was up. Why on earth should they be getting up steam after leaving the dock, instead of before? Had the fires been banked when I came aboard to stow away? Then why had the ship seemed so untenanted?

Why had she laid there at the dock with every outward evidence of desertion? Being somewhat familiar with ships and their methods, I stood there in the blackness pondering these matters, and the more I meditated, the more unusual they seemed. There was an air of furtiveness about this peculiar departure that wasn't pleasing to an involuntary passenger.

I returned to the foot of the ladder, whose top was immediately beneath the hatch against the coaming and was considering the advisability of mounting upward and trying to attract attention, when a change of movement became audible and sensible, a rough disturbance caused by vibration, and in an instant I knew that she had been given steam and that her screw was being used at slow speed as if to guide her. Then this suddenly stopped, took on again, in reverse. I couldn't understand this, either, until I heard men working at the hatch over my head. I slipped quickly back to my hiding place.

The hatch was thrown aside, a light flashed downward, and I heard a voice.

"If you want to go below, monsieur, to look at her empty interior, you're welcome, of course."

Peering above my crates I saw uniformed legs descending, and a customs officer stood, hanging to the ladder like a lazy beetle, and threw his light to and fro over the bales of rags, the pyramid of fish nets and the surrounding emptiness. He paused, irresolute, and asked a question.

"You say you're bound for Bordeaux, in ballast. Then what's all this stuff down here?"

"Six bales of rags that a man shipped because he could get the stuff up for next to nothing, and the fish nets are a lot of old muck sent by the same to a fisherman friend of his. Rubbish. Nice batch of cargo for the first voyage the old tub has made in months. Shipping out of Bayonne seems to have gone to the devil. But—better luck—*à la Bonheur!* Maybe we'll get enough

in Bordeaux to keep her moving. Good for us. Give us a job while it lasts, and—jobs are scarce on the seas nowadays."

For another moment the customs officer stood, swinging his electric torch, and then, slowly ascending, remarked: "Pfaugh! Luck to her and you—with your bales of rags!"

I crouched in my place, thinking gratefully of my luck. I was at least getting a free passage back to Bordeaux and there I had, at least, a change of clothes and personal effects despite a hotel bill. The screw began to beat again at full speed and the ship hit the first open sea wave and rolled as only a small freighter in ballast can roll, with that peculiarly empty, vacant, purposeless motion, without rhythm or stability.

I came back out of my place and discovered that the hatch had not been closed and that the stars shone brightly through the opened square like tiny decorations framed in a black ceiling. Moreover, there could be no doubt that we were at sea. I climbed upward and cautiously put my head above the coaming to look around, and—as hastily withdrew it. Three men were lounging by the rail and I heard:

"Well, that old camel was easy. We've got away, and that's something."

"It takes the Old Man to put a thing over when it requires cold nerve and brass," another voice growled. "But what'll the port authorities at Bordeaux think when we don't show up?"

"Oh, he'll find a way to fix that, too. See if he don't! All we've got to worry about now are the Spanish coast guards. A black night to-morrow would come in pretty handy for us, I take it."

"Yes, we've got to have that. Otherwise it's a case of stand off and on and wait for one, I suppose."

"Unless some Spanish gunboat gets curious and overhauls us."

Then they fell to reminiscence, and I needed nothing more than the character of their exploits to learn that I was at sea with a hard outfit, bound on some decidedly unlawful cruise. It put from my head all thought of going on deck, telling my story and asking to be put ashore at the earliest convenience.

Whatever this cruise might be, I surmised that it was of a character that wouldn't bear the presence of a stranger and that the crew of this unwholesome and surreptitious craft would have no hesitancy in applying the fine and time-worn Spanish proverb: "A slit throat is not garrulous."

My predicament had assumed far graver proportions than the mere fear of a jail through vagrancy, for now I could not but conclude that my life was in jeopardy. With a supply of water and food I might endure the discomforts with greater courage; but, being already hungry and thirsty, the implied prospect of being without either for perhaps days was worse than depressing. I retreated to my hiding place and threw myself down to consider and again sleep finally overcame me.

WHEN I awoke, I thought it was still night, and for a while I rested on my back hoping to pass the time in sleep; but it was useless. I went cautiously to the hatchway again and then discovered the reason. It was closed. I mounted the ladder and cautiously thrust upward and to my joy learned that it was not battened down. I thrust more heavily and a crack of brilliant sunlight appeared.

I dared no more, lest my presence be discovered by some one on the deck. A man slouched backward and forward and finally threw himself down on the hatch. Presently he was joined by another of the crew and they conversed lazily, at long intervals. Their chief

concern, I gathered from what I could hear, was whether a bank of haze in the west would prove to be a fog, or clouds. They hoped for fog.

"The Old Man could find his way to the cove blindfolded," one of them asserted. "And with a good fog bank we could get clean up to the shoals, which would mean only a half mile of oar work."

"Humph! It's not oar work that worries me," the other declared. "Me, I don't mind work like you do, but I've no wish to stand in front of a Spanish firing party. That's what would happen to us."

"Bah! Of course. But we knew that when we took the job on." Then the speaker taunted the other with losing his nerve, which was sullenly denied.

Finally, from the prolonged silence, followed by a snore, I knew they were napping sailorwise on top of the hatch. Again I descended to my cavern, and now the desire for a drink was difficult to thrust from my mind. Common sense told me that I was in anything but a perishing condition of thirst, but, as is always the case when a thing is unattainable, it becomes doubly desirable.

THE time dragged mercilessly. I imagined it to be at least a day's full duration. It was hot in the gloomy cavern. It seemed that the sun must be standing still. I had not paused to reason that long after the sun had disappeared the heat of the hold would be retained. I resolved to venture lifting the hatch cover again to learn the time and had a most narrow escape.

Just as I was groping my way toward the ladder with a lighted match in my hand, the screw, which had been turning but slowly for what seemed hours, stopped in response to the clanging of a gong that sounded remote and faint. The ship lay still and scarcely lifting herself on a languid sea. Feet ran clumping and hurriedly over the deck above, and then with a clash and thump the hatch covering was hastily removed. The continued darkness warned me that it was nightfall.

Down the ladder came a man, followed by another, carrying lanterns which they hung on stanchions. They began to call to their companions above. Two more men descended and they went across to the heap of fish nets and heaved and tugged them away, their shadows, thrown by the lantern light, working like monstrous, misshapen giants weaving and heaving to and fro. Down into the hold with a thump came a heavy cargo sling, its knotted network falling in the pool of lantern light.

The four men below seized one of what I had thought to be merely empty packing cases, and I could see by the surge of their back muscles that not only were the cases full, but that they were extremely heavy and hard to handle. The men grunted and strained in unison to the *"Ar-r-riba! Yo! Arribba! Yo!"* of one of their number, got it into the sling and finally placed another by its side.

"Alzar!" called the spokesman, as he wiped the sweat from his forehead, and the sling stiffened and crawled slowly and noiselessly upward.

Undoubtedly the illicit cargo was being hoisted by block and tackle, which again proved the desire for secrecy on the part of the crew, for otherwise the winch would have been utilized for such a weight. Slowly it climbed upward and disappeared. The men below fell to getting the remaining cases into a convenient place, close beneath the hatch.

Once one of the men awkwardly dropped a small box that he was carrying unaided. The head man turned on him with savage ferocity.

"Mon Dieu!" he cried. "Do you

want to blow us all to hell? Those smaller boxes are full of bombs, you dumb ass! Get on deck and heave on the line. You're too cursed clumsy to be down here. Up with you!" He followed this with a bellow of Basque and Spanish that seemed, from the celerity with which the man ascended, potent and fearsome.

Then I, hiding behind the old crates and boxes forward, knew their secret. They were smuggling arms and munitions into Spain, where for months rebellion had been suppressed only by an unflinching and strong hand. Any conjecture as to how long my life might be spared in the event of discovery was decided. It would be for just about a minute in the hands and under the knives of such men as these.

The last of the cases were hoisted to the deck and the men followed them, taking their lanterns with them and leaving the hold in solid blackness, save for the dimly lit square of the cargo hatch, where lanterns outside gave a faint glow. I made for it hastily, hoping miserably for any opportunity to escape.

THEN again I heard the engine-room gong and felt the ship start cautiously, as if slipping through narrow channels. From forward I heard a leadsman's voice calling fathoms. Once the ship stopped as if uncertain, and then again crept forward. There was something almost uncanny in her stealth and the silence upon her decks. I risked everything in my necessity for observation and climbed cautiously upward until, by swinging far out on one side and then the other of my ladder, I could see that no man was within view and the lanterns so dim that their light could scarcely betray me when I lifted my eyes above the coaming

Not a man was near. The entire crew seemed to have gone forward. A heavy fog hung over us like a blanket. It was so dense that from my position I could not even define the outline of the bridge. Ahead of us came the dull wash of waves, breaking slowly and regularly over shoals. The sea was scarcely running and but for a lazy ground swell might have been that of an inland harbor.

I was pondering what to do when I heard the engines rung down and, convinced that I must take desperate chances, made the rest of the ascent with a rush, bolted to the side opposite to the cases of ammunition, found it deserted and like a harried rat looked about for a place of concealment. I saw a tarpaulin-covered lump, dived for it, crawled under and found myself up against the grease and rust of the winch. For a moment I despaired and would have crawled out again and sought another hiding place had I not heard steps running in my direction. I could but hope that the same caution that had impelled the gun runners to hoist the cargo from the hold by hand would be exercised in getting it over the side.

"There they come!" exclaimed a man standing so close that I could have reached out and tripped him. "Red and green light, right enough!"

Then came a rush of other feet and an order to lower away a boat. Evidently it had been swung out on the davits in readiness, for in but a moment it took the water with a splash.

"Go easy about it and work fast, captain!" a voice called softly from overside. "There was a government gunboat loafing along coastwise a while before this fog shut down."

"Then the sooner we get this stuff off, the sooner they're welcome to look us over," the gruff voice that I had heard giving orders responded, and then added: "I'll put another boat into the dip and make quick work of it."

Under his instructions part of his little crew put out another boat, while

the others fell to lowering cases over the rail. They worked as if their lives depended upon their celerity, and with grunting and hoarse epithets lifted and tugged. I raised the edge of the tarpaulin and saw when the boat on the port side was let go, heard the men take to the oars and pull away to bring her around to starboard, where the cases were being lowered, and considered my situation anew.

If there was a gunboat outside that might overhaul the gun runner, I could appear in safety. If there wasn't, I might be finished through thirst and hunger before a chance came to escape. Better to take chances while they were there, close ashore, and trust to the land for the future.

Then there was the fog, their intentness on their work, the boat falls that had been left dangling on the port side; and I was a fairly expert swimmer. In an instant I had come to a decision. Wriggling out from beneath the tarpaulin, I crawled to the rail, saw that the end of the fall was fast, went over like a cat surmounting a fence and slid down into the water.

IT felt cool and comforting to my parched body and I struck out toward the shoals, in the direction from which I knew the shore boat had come. The black shadow of the ship lay alongside me and I swam with caution until I came abreast of her nose when, looking upward, I made out, with no sense of curiosity but inadvertently, the name *Marie Etienne*. Then, taking a point that would keep me clear of the first boat, I swam as fast as I could, intent upon putting distance between me and the ship before the boat might come shoreward.

Apparently I made a mistake, or else the boat's course was not true in line with the lay of the ship, for while I swam I heard the thud of oars in rowlocks and instantly discerned her course. A man was holding a lantern in the prow, so I made a long dive, swimming under water at right angles. I remained under until my lungs rebelled and then cautiously came to the surface.

The boat had passed and was at some distance from me, and now I swam again, keeping her light as a guide for direction. It had become but a tiny point of fire when I struck the shoals and, finding the sand beneath my feet, stood and rested, with my head and shoulders comfortably above water. I listened intently and to my left caught the sound of waves beating against the foot of cliffs, or reefs. The boat had gone to the right, after clearing a channel in the shoals, and reluctantly I was compelled to take the same course, fearing, meanwhile, that the second boat might overtake me.

It did finally come, but at a safe distance to one side, and I swam steadily after it. Then to my surprise, just as my feet touched bottom, its light seemed to disappear. For a moment or two I rested, speculating on whether it could have extinguished its light, for some unexpected reason. Then, deciding that this could scarcely be so, I went ahead.

Suddenly, without warning, the water deepened so quickly that I went over my head; quite as if I had stepped from the edge of a rock surface, secure, certain and solid, into terrifying depths. I came to the surface and swam twenty or thirty yards to come in contact with a hard, harsh, sheer wall. Not a surge of wave reached its inflexible face. Not a surge of wave against it cried: "Beware!" Nor was there ledge or crevice to give hold of hand.

Beneath it the waters were deep and dark and still. I turned to the left and swam, feeling from time to time for anything to help me, but found nothing. To swim in the other direction

would bring me to the boats; but in the end I was driven to it through sheer fatigue, a loss of direction, a sense of blind and malignant mercilessness.

Weakened by starvation and thirst as I was, I could no longer choose any route save that which promised to give me at least momentary rest and recuperation. I turned and swam back along the rocky face, touching it now and then with an elbow or an outthrust foot or leg. I clung to it as a man, lonely, dying, clings to company for his last effort in life.

Its interminable length frightened me. Its eternally smooth surface rebuffed me. I came to that stage in a drowning man's episode where I questioned whether it might not be best to accept the great beneficence of rest, to cease effort, to let go, to settle quietly into the waiting and enticing arms of oblivion. I sank once and, with Nature's final protest, arose, struggling, striking wildly, blindly, with thrashing hands and arms.

I felt my fingers slipping over the face of the austere, unfeeling, unyielding rock, then they caught and clutched a mere projection—a tiny point of hardness that had resisted the stern, implacable, unending combat of the sea. To this, drowning, I clung, until senses coördinated and the love of life resumed.

I HAVE often wondered, but can never know, how long my hand held to that saving point. I have no doubt but that for its succor in my moment of dire extremity I should have passed to the sea floor and its finality. But cling there I did, exhausted, too confused to be thankful, too spent to realize that I was still alive, that life was slowly fighting for supremacy and continuance and that my lungs were in convulsive, spasmodic efforts throwing off the waters that had been inhaled. For a few minutes I was sick. Sick like a dog that has been half drowned. Then slowly my head cleared and memory returned, and with it all the sad incertitudes of my existence and occasion.

My handhold was just at the water's edge. My arm was doubled tightly, to hold my head above the surface of the still and waiting sea. I was shivering with hesitancy as to my best course for renewed effort, considering it, weighing its chances. I was holding there to that sole projection and loath to abandon its temporary security when, barely ten yards from me, there shot into view a yellow gleam that caught long, path-like reflections from the water in which I was immersed.

It was fortunate that I had sufficiently recovered my wits to draw a long breath and lower myself into the water; for otherwise the gleams of the boat's lantern might have been reflected from my white face and tired eyes. Clinging to the friendly projection, I swung over to my back, threw chest and lips upward until I had cleared the surface sufficiently to breathe and for a long time remained in that position.

When I dared lift myself upward to a point of vision, I saw that the lantern was far away, bobbing jerkily up and down as the boat rose and fell. I was watching its progress outward into the pall of fog that was slowly lifting along the borders of the horizon to display brilliant stars, when another glare of light emerged. This time, less startled, I risked holding my head above the water, with face turned to avoid the light and pressed against the wet wall.

"Merci le bon Dieu!" I heard a voice exclaim. "We've finished the job. We've landed the lot, and——"

"Now it's for them to take the risk!" interrupted another voice. "For us, we're off and the dons can go to hell for all we care!"

In time I ventured to turn my head. The boat light was bobbing along the wake of its predecessor, and I knew

that the *Marie Etienne* could show a clean hold to any curiously intercepting and frigidly investigating gunboat of His Majesty, King Alfonso of Spain. It was of no help to me in my distress, but it gave the comfortable assurance that I was still alive, that I had escaped death thus far, that I could be no worse off than when shut up in that dark hold with a murderous crew ready to knife or drown me if I were found. There was still my supporting knob of rock, my breath, the slowly expanding view of stars.

CHAPTER III.

ON A NARROW BRIDGE.

I WAITED a spell for sight of the shore boat that had first intercepted the gun runner and then, deciding that it might not reappear, swam slowly along the cliff, feeling its surface now and then to make certain of my direction. Abruptly I came to a sharp turn and, still following the line of the wall, swam in a new direction.

When I least anticipated it, I felt a ledge rising from the water on my left side, and presently this developed into a well-defined but narrow shelf of rock. I climbed up to it, glad to escape from the water, and, groping, crept along it. It led steadily upward. I began to hope that it would go to the top of the cliff, but in that intense blackness could take no observations.

It seemed to me that I must have gained a height of perhaps forty or fifty feet, crawling along that shelf by a sense of feeling only and trembling with the fear that the ledge might come to an end, or to a weak place that would crumble beneath my weight and plunge me below, when a dim light began to show ahead. It was peculiar. It had not the character of daylight. It rose and fell, diminished and expanded. I advanced, wondering, made a sharp turn and stopped abruptly and stretched at full length on my ledge and stared below.

The light came from a fire far beneath me on the floor of a cavern on whose side I was perched. A group of men, foreshortened to my sight, moved round it. They had removed the tops from cases of rifles. Regularly and at intervals a man would shoulder as many of these rifles as he could conveniently carry and disappear into the blacker depths beyond.

The gun smugglers were hiding their arsenal somewhere behind. Now and then a sentence in Spanish reached me when some man spoke, but as a rule they worked in silence, coming and going, while one man stood with a notebook in hand, checking the numbers of weapons and cases of cartridges which were now being moved.

I had small interest in their affairs, but did have a great desire to escape, so resumed my advance along the ledge, hoping that it would lead me out of the place. This seemed a forlorn hope, however, and more likely to bring me eventually to a point where farther progress would be impossible. Now and then I looked below and made out another fire and a smaller side cavern, some fifteen or twenty feet, I judged, above the main floor surface, up to which the arms and munitions were carried by means of a crude ladder and with much effort.

By this time, however, I had small care for anything other than my narrow ledge, which had gained such a height that a slip or fall could mean nothing less than death. Yet the light of the fire beneath proved my salvation; for I came to a place where the ledge ceased and a gap across it was bridged by what I at first believed to be only a solitary plank.

The wall also fell away to the side, and I was confronted with a space that would have tried the nerves of any but a skilled and cool-headed mountaineer,

or a steel worker on a skyscraper. I funked it, and for a half minute lay there in a cold sweat of despair.

Then it came to my mind that this narrow bridge proved my course to be the means of access and egress to the cavern up which presently—and probably very soon!—the gun smugglers must come. If they found me there, they would simply throw me off the ledge. I decided to retreat and take to the water again, when another thought warned me that for a considerable distance I must crawl backward, which would take time.

Time I couldn't have, because, as nearly as I could remember, the larger portion of the illicit cargo had been stowed before I passed from sight of the operations below. At any minute now the Spaniards might complete their sequestration and begin their ascent.

IN a lot of ways I have the average share of nerve; but height has to me always been terrifying. I can't look from the top of a skyscraper without fear. I'd never make a decent mountain climber. It's not in me. And so, for I don't know how long a time, I lay there in abject terror and very close to the final despair. Then, in sheer desperation, I shut my eyes and crawled out on that plank like a worm.

I had to clutch my senses to keep from becoming paralyzed, from fainting there over the void. The plank swayed and bent beneath my weight, and nothing but an exercise of common sense and reiterated mental hammerings assured me that it couldn't break beneath a man's weight, for otherwise it wouldn't have been there at all. My hands and finger nails gripped into it so hard that they were torn and bleeding—a useless, frenzied exercise impelled by terror. I gained the center, found a splice, and it seemed to me that the long planks were so strained that I was in a hollow between immense hills and that the climb upward was of an impossible steepness.

Then, sweating with fear, half mad, in fact, from the same cause, I dug forward as if my safety depended entirely upon my haste. My hands came in contact with a rope knotted round the end of the last plank. I clutched beyond and found nothing but solid rock, and a moment later lay there quivering like one afflicted with ague, for a time so overcome with relief that I was helpless and hysterical.

Slowly I came to calmness and felt around me. I was on a broad ledge that still ascended. By my side lay a long, heavy rope. I surmised that when the bridge was not in use, it was lowered over the side and by some means concealed. The fact that the rope was on the upper end indicated that any one left below after its removal would be completely cut off by that terrifying gap.

For a moment I debated the advisability of throwing the end of the plank off to prevent pursuit from the cavern, then, remembering that the gun runners had a boat at their disposal, decided that such a move would be dangerous, because they might possibly escape by water and find me somewhere on the surface of the cliffs. On the other hand, as long as they had no knowledge that their operations had been observed, there would be no chase after me, once I gained the open air. The thought that I myself might again have need for that bridge did not enter into my forbearance.

The light behind me was dying down, as if its purpose had been fulfilled, and it was not now being replenished. I must no longer delay. I got to my feet this time in a new form of panic and moved rapidly forward. The ledge was broad and secure for a considerable distance, then it suddenly ended as a ledge and became the floor of a cave, or crevice, which speedily narrowed

down until I could touch both walls with my groping hands.

I got a bump on the head that, while not heavy enough to knock me down, brought me to my knees and a sense of caution. Then to my added consternation the entire passage closed in until I had to crawl on hands and knees. All sorts of fears descended—the fear of crawling over a sleeping viper, the fear that this underground burrow led nowhere and that I had missed the main and regular path of egress, the fear of whether the end of the passage when reached might be guarded or blocked.

INASMUCH as all I could do was to keep trying, I advanced. Finally the ordeal became still more terrifying in that the passage constricted until I could no longer use hands and knees and had to wriggle through a space so small that I was stretched out full-length and convinced that if this was no egress and came to an end, it would be almost impossible for me to retreat and I must eventually die there, lingering and entombed.

I have heard of those who became panic-stricken when first they enter deep mines and their imagination pictures the effect of millions of tons of earth and rock subsiding upon them. I no longer laugh when I hear of those individuals or think them cowardly. I know better, since that night's experience, and my only wonder is that I didn't go mad there in that horrible burrow, turn white-headed with fear, and——

Then, when I was nearly spent with weakness, emotion, and fatigue, I smelled fresh air. It was like a draft from heaven. It revived me like a great and all-pervading stimulant. It brought hope and strength. I crawled faster and suddenly found myself with sufficient room to advance on hands and knees. I was wondering how soon I could reach a place where I could stand upright when my hands came in contact with the end of the passage.

I felt all round, then discovered that I could stand almost erect and that above me were mildewed planks with here and there a gaping crack, a door of sorts that was closed against me and shut in the entire opening. My discouragement was but momentary, and my only fear what might be on its outer side. I got an ear to a crack and listened for the sounds of footsteps, voices, or movement. Nothing but silence!

I thought again that I dared not delay and so risked whatever peril or vicissitude stood guard over that barrier and lifted the trapdoor upward. It gave easily, noiselessly, and I thrust it to one side sufficiently to get my head through and look around. Above me were stars, indicating that I had climbed above the fog-laden sea level. In the dim light I saw rocks, but nowhere a light. The silhouette of mountains became visible against the heavens.

I climbed out and replaced the trapdoor, marveling meanwhile at its cunning, for it had small rocks and turf fastened on its outer side so that when closed I doubt not that it would be safe from chance discovery. Nor was there any sign of a path leading from it, which I took to be an indication that it was but rarely used and that those who came there used precautions to leave no traces.

I did not wonder that an outer guard was deemed unnecessary. A man might have walked over it in ignorance of what lay concealed beneath. I crouched, perhaps needlessly, and moved with caution until I had gone at least a hundred yards and then broke into a tired and stumbling run, to put distance between myself and that danger hole from which at any time the gun smugglers might emerge.

It is extraordinary how relief from immediate and deadly peril brings op-

timism. There was I in the night, without the remotest idea of where I was, save for the surmise that I was in Spain, half dead from thirst, hunger and exhaustion; penniless, ragged and wet, unshaven, uncombed, unkempt, with no passport or any means of identification, and yet for the time being I was elated, if not happy. The stars were above, the fog banks below, and I found a rough mountain road that must inevitably lead somewhere.

I took it and, as if to justify my optimism, had traversed it but a short distance before it crossed a stream of clear, cold, delicious water. No water ever tasted so good. No water seemed so cleanly or to have such cleaning properties. I took off my clothing, when I found a pool, had a bath, and washed my entire clothing, wrung it as dry as possible and resumed it with a sense of comparative comfort. Then I was aware of my hunger and went back to the road and followed it with a keen curiosity as to whither it might lead me. Dawn was coming into the east—a still, fragrant, windless dawn that was soft with summer's warmth and balm.

THE road, in the stronger light, appeared less promising. It wound into the tops of the mountains that were more or less desolate and barren. It seemed never ending, never reaching anywhere. The day came stronger. I had walked miles and yet had reached nothing save an abandoned farmhouse. There the road became even less distinct and the marks of usage less plain. I hesitated and looked over the abandoned homestead, hoping to find something to eat.

In what had been a truck garden I came upon some turnips that had evidently replanted themselves from the previous year's seed, munched on their bitter, stringy toughness until afraid that they might upset me, then went on. What I had eaten merely served to render my hunger more acute. At last the road reached a crest and clearing. Its purpose was explained.

It was nothing more than an abandoned road which had been neglected after the timber which it reached had been cut away. I sat down in the sunrise, but for me it had no beauties. I was not sleepy, for my long slumbers in the hold of the *Marie Etienne* had drugged me with sleep; but I was discouraged, tired and footsore. In the warmth my clothing dried somewhat, and I felt that if I could but find some place to ask for food—food of any sort—I was not too utterly unpresentable.

The tinkling of a bell disturbed my thoughts. It was followed by a melancholy minor tune, played upon some sort of oboe or pastoral pipes. Then, presently into the clearing, cropping the scant foliage, came a herd of goats, followed by a boy on whom, to this day, I wish blessings. Many of them—for he had a bag slung over his back and a pleasant, friendly and inquisitive grin on his face, and did not run when I hailed him in my frightful but adequate Spanish of the kind learned in Mexico.

I told him that I was on a walking tour, had lost my way, been out all night and was hungry.

"Yo no tengo mucho, pero, Gracias a Dias! Aqui es una rebenada de pan con mantaquilla por V.," he instantly said, as he bestowed his primitive pipes through a hole in his hat and opened his pack and handed me a slice of coarse but wholesome bread and butter.

He had told the truth, that little gentleman, for he didn't have much, yet was willing to share with me. I doubt if he would have accepted money or any payment if I had had anything to offer him. At least he did not seem disappointed when I proffered nothing in return. He cheerfully told me that he would take me to a trail which led to the village from which he came.

The goats? God would look after them for a time, he gravely assured me, as he led the way to a path on an eminence and pointed to where, down at the head of a sweeping valley that cut its way swiftly toward the sea, stood a tiny village with a single white spire. We parted like gentlemen, smiling, shaking hands and bowing

CHAPTER IV.

SEVENTY-FIVE AN HOUR.

I WENT on more blithely, with at least an edge of my hunger smoothed, although I could have eaten ten times as much and still felt extremely empty. The spire grew larger, its old bells distinct on their clumsy wooden hangings, the broken tiles of its cupola showing through the gray lichen.

At last I entered a tiny green forest all heavy with summer foliage, in which birds were busy and bees hummed about blossoms. Then I came out into a little plaza and to my curiosity saw a huge Hispano-Suisse sedan of the brougham type standing there, with a group of a half dozen villagers and peasants standing around it, while a young woman expostulated with them.

"Well, for the love of Heaven! Can't any of you do something? Why do you all stand there with your mouths open and shake your heads?" she demanded, as if her patience had reached a limit.

"But the noble señorita, the Contessa Amparra, does not seem to understand that to us a great car is like an unknown monster and—— We could put your man on a hay cart and take him to San Doro, where there is a doctor, and perhaps there find some one who could——"

The man stopped and stared at me, as I joined the group, then gravely touched his fingers to his cap as if hoping that I might relieve them of the lady's contempt, or at least create a diversion. She turned her head and observed me, as if expecting but another rustic peasant as incompetent as the others, and into her eyes, that were large, dark and of a deep-violet blue, came an appraising, almost eager look.

"And you?" she said, sweeping me up and down with her eyes. "Do you know anything about cars, or how to drive them?"

I doffed the Basque cap, which through all my vicissitudes I had retained flattened tightly to my skull, and said:

"Yes, I am familiar with cars. And I know how to drive them. What is the trouble, may I ask?"

A puzzled look came over her face and she said, less brusquely:

"You are not Spanish, are you?"

"No, I am an American," I replied.

Her face abruptly broke into a smile that would have earned any assistance I might give her. It was a startling change, for suddenly she seemed beautiful, friendly, almost gracious, and, when she spoke, she astonished me by speaking in almost perfect English.

"I have a new chauffeur who doesn't know his business. He came to me but yesterday, succeeded in stalling the car back there on the road, couldn't make the starter work, got out and undertook to crank it up and—I think his wrist is broken. Esmerelda, my duenna, is inside doing what she can for him, but there's not a doctor in this hamlet. I can't drive, and here I am, stuck, when time means everything to me. Everything! Oh, you don't know what——"

She stopped, as if remembering that she might be betraying herself by the speech of impetuosity and distress. It was my opportunity and I snapped at it with avidity.

"I not only can drive," I said, "but if you would accept me as a chauffeur, I am at your disposal. For a day, or for longer, inasmuch as I have nothing else to do."

She clapped her hands excitedly.

"A Daniel!" she cried. "An angel fallen from the heavens! You are hired, Mister——"

"Roberts," I supplied. "Where do we go? I do not know the roads."

"Wait until I get Esmerelda and that chauffeur into the back seat and I will sit beside you and direct," she remarked, in a businesslike way, and stepped to the door of the little albergo while I looked over my new charge and inspected the electric starter. Nobody but a fool could have failed to discover what was wrong with it in a minute and, by the time she had returned with her man and the duenna, I had it repaired.

THE duenna was a woman of majestic stature and imposing appearance. She was a full head taller than the chauffeur, who was himself a man of average stature. She gestured him into the rear seat and then turned and scrutinized me, as if I were something to be appraised. Her eyes, large, black as night, and widely spaced above a nose that would have not been misplaced on a conqueror, swept over me coldly as if with distinct and pronounced disapproval.

"Amparra," she said severely, in Spanish, "this man, this tramp you have picked up——"

The contessa instantly proved that she was not one to submit to dictation; for she impatiently interrupted with: "I am employing him as a chauffeur—or at least to drive us to Biarritz. He says he can drive. Get in, please. We waste time."

With a savage frown of discontent, the duenna obeyed. I closed the door, mounted and we were off.

"You can certainly drive," my employer commented, before we had driven a half mile and when only by a quick turn had I avoided collision with a stubborn ox team that nearly backed a cart laden with logs into our front wheels.

I didn't reply, but might have told her that some of the road police of my own country in my more violent youth might have disagreed with her and told her that I had the reputation of being a trifle too fast, if adept.

"You haven't asked what your wages are to be," she remarked, as if to confirm my employment.

"Whatever you say. It doesn't in the least matter to me," I said, without thought of anything except food and shelter and the wherewithal to buy new clothing until my luck turned.

"Isn't that—isn't that rather unusual?" she asked, turning sidewise and staring at me.

"No more unusual than employing a chauffeur in clothes like mine without references," I replied, grinning in spite of myself.

"Why, haven't you any?" she demanded.

"No," I admitted, "I haven't. But if you'll take my word instead of—ummh!—my last employer's, I'll guarantee to honesty, sobriety and willingness."

She laughed softly, as if secretly amused. She might have continued her conversation had it not been necessary for her to tell me how to proceed, now that we had reached the outskirts of a considerable town.

"We'll leave that man of mine here," she said, "and order a doctor for him. Then we will have to drive hard, because I must reach Biarritz as soon as possible."

"Good Lord!" I exclaimed. "That settles it. I can't drive you into France. I've—I've lost my passport!"

I think there must have been considerable despair, or at least disappointment, in my voice that I had failed to suppress.

"Then we must find a way to get around that. We must!" she declared,

as if her case was one of desperation. "I simply can't be delayed. I must get through."

A moment later she again made that funny, emphatic gesture of slapping her hands together. "I have it!" she exclaimed. "That chauffeur's uniform belongs to me. I should think it would fit you—maybe a little snugly across the shoulders, but it will do. And he has a passport that he's got to lend us. He must! I'll hire it from him for two days and return it by mail."

"He might object," I said, but with my heart thumping with hope.

"He's not the kind that will stop at a little thing like changing clothes and lending a passport when a hundred or so pesetas are pushed under his nose," she asserted, and from then on, until we reached a small hotel to which she directed me, sat thoughtfully, as if planning her campaign.

"You stay out here—Roberts—until I call you," she ordered, as she bustled out to the pavement and told her injured chauffeur to follow her inside.

The duenna also started to descend, but was told to remain in the car. It certainly was not more than ten minutes later when a waiter appeared and told me that the señorita desired my presence. When I climbed up a flight of stairs, I found her standing in the hallway. She spoke as if expecting instant obedience from all around her, myself included.

"You go back and watch the car," she said, in Spanish, to the waiter, and then to me in English: "And you go into that room there and change clothes with that fellow. He's probably got his off by now. And see that he gives you the passport and be quick! I don't wish to waste a minute. Not a single minute!"

I remembered my hunger and told her of it, but that I could wait if necessary. She cut me off with another command:

"Go change the clothing and get the passport. I'll see that they get you a breakfast ready downstairs."

The chauffeur met me with a grin, despite the pain of his arm, and appeared to be a good fellow, but somewhat stupid. Anyway, he seemed gratified with whatever money he was making out of the transaction and produced his passport.

"You can tell them that you've shaved off your mustache," he suggested.

It struck me that a clean shave would add to this assertion. He was good enough then to lend me his shaving kit from the little bag which he had brought with him. I felt clean and well dressed in that uniform when I descended the stairs having become, temporarily, according to my passport, Guadalupe Amardo.

I FELT even better after I had worked the destruction of a good and ample breakfast. I was ready for the service of the impatient young lady who was walking restlessly backward and forward near the waiting car. She was in it with a single leap and urging me to haste and giving me directions all in the same sentence.

We struck inland for a short distance and I found in front of me a magnificent highway which my new employer told me was the Spanish Corniche, a famous auto drive, and either that breakfast, my new employment, or the girl beside me exhilarated me to try that car out. I took hairpin turns that would have turned Barney Oldfield blue with envy, climbed a hill at fifty miles an hour and shot downward along a gradual sweep with my eye on the speedometer, gleefully noting that we were doing seventy-five with ease.

I wondered what the duenna, in her glass cage behind, thought of it. And still I couldn't get a shiver or a cau-

tion from the contessa. We slowed down through a few picturesque old Spanish towns, wound our way through Guitarra on its headland, shot through a few tunnels and saw San Sebastin, one of the royal cities of Spain, ahead of us.

We passed sedately through its shaded avenues and splendid streets, crossed one of its great stone bridges and were unexpectedly held up by a broken lorry and a block of traffic on our side of the road. My employer said several things under her breath and was half standing to look forward, when she gave a sharp little exclamation and turned her attention to a big limousine that was placidly tooling past us toward the city.

"Roberts," she said, "swing out and follow the car that just passed us. Quickly! Don't lose it!"

I responded recklessly, intent on pleasing her. The traffic policeman shouted, but my lady thrust her head out of the window and waved at him.

He saluted with great deference and we turned back. I flatter myself I did some rather expert wheel work in the following few minutes, but we gained into the wake of the car we sought and the contessa rested a hand on my arm.

"Don't pass them and don't get close enough to let them observe we are following," she said. "If they go through the city, we must hang on to them and race them to a standstill until I can get out and speak to them. But if they stop anywhere—well—I don't know what we shall do! It depends."

Undoubtedly those ahead were unconscious of our pursuit, for they drove leisurely into one of the principal thoroughfares and thence to the huge Continental Hotel.

"Draw up to the curb behind them—here!" my employer said hastily.

I obeyed, wondering what she intended to do, for she made no move. When I would have jumped out to open the door, she told me to sit still while we watched a tall, broad-shouldered, gray-haired man descend. There was something peculiarly familiar about him that caused me to lean forward, trying to get a view of his full face, and I wondered who he was and where I had seen him.

"I wish the old devil would fall and break his neck!" I heard in Spanish by my side, and looked at the girl, who was watching the gray-haired man if her remark had been entirely in earnest.

The big man failed to grant her wish. He was immediately followed by what seemed to be a secretarial sort of person, with a portfolio under his arm. The driver closed the door and stood talking to a porter. The girl by my side gave a little sigh of what I took to be relief, and ordered:

"Drive slowly past that car, so I can see if there is any one else in it."

We did and found it empty.

"Thank Heaven!" she exclaimed. "Now we will turn back and go into Biarritz. Also we need break no records, but can travel comfortably."

I felt that for some inexplicable reason she was relieved, for presently she began to talk, interrupting my effort to recall the identity of the man who had descended at the Continental. I soon learned that she was exercising her curiosity on me, almost as if for the first time she considered the fact of my existence.

"How did you happen to be in that village this morning?" she asked, and I was aware that she was eying me, while I, driving over a thoroughfare that was now populous with cars—some of which weren't too well driven—was compelled to stare ahead.

I thought the story I had told the goatherd sufficiently good to repeat, but to show that she wasn't quite convinced she asked:

"But—what would you have done

without a passport? Where was it lost?"

Unthinkingly, and momentarily distracted, I answered:

"In Bordeaux."

She brought me back, to my confusion, with: "Then how on earth did you cross the boundary from France into Spain?"

I told her I had blundered across at a point where no one demanded it, and for an appreciable time she sat silently, as if pondering over this statement. Then, to prove that she wasn't lacking in observation, she asked:

"Where had you been early this morning to get your clothes so damp?"

"Fell into a stream," I replied untruthfully and smoothly.

She smiled and looked out at the splendid scenery through which we were passing, up at the tops of the Pyrenees, then again at the road.

"Anyway, you've driven before," she at last said, as if that were the sole portion of all that I had told her which could be believed. "And, being an American, you're not likely to be mixed up with——"

Suddenly she stopped, frowned, and I thought for a time stared at me with anything but a friendly scrutiny. It was not for me to ask her to finish her sentence. Indeed, all I craved was to be left alone and accepted as any other chauffeur might have been, for at least sufficient time to get my affairs untangled.

She seemed thoughtful after that and said nothing beyond a comment on the road now and then, until we neared the Bidassoa River and the Spanish frontier. Then she said, with a little smile of mischief:

"Perhaps you had best hand me your passport. It may save questions. I have Esmerelda's."

I did so. As we drew down and halted at the customs office, an officer, who had been seated in the little arcade, arose with a flourish, brushed his subordinates aside, came to the car and saluted her with: *"Buenas dias, contessa."*

She acknowledged his courtesy and handed him the three passports which he scarcely examined before speeding us forward.

"Contessa—of what?" I thought. "Evidently pretty well known. Contessa—of what, I wonder?"

We swung across the international bridge. At Behobie on the French side she was again accorded this same show of deference, which she seemed to accept as a habitual right, and I gave a sigh of relief, aware that I was back again in France and within reasonable distance of my own passport and belongings, although without money to pay that confounded hotel bill in Bordeaux. I could not conjecture how I was to obtain my property.

THE contessa continued to ask me the most embarrassing questions, among others my full name and age, with which to fill out the "Employer's Liability Card," and, most vexing of all, if I had my driver's license. It happened that when I first came to France I had occasion to rent a car and had obtained my license.

To apply for another under my own name might lead to difficulties unforeseen, and to apply in another name would bring this new employer of mine into trouble, if my real identity became known. In sheer desperation I blurted:

"I have a confession to make before this employment becomes fixed. I owe a hotel bill in Bordeaux. My passport and driver's license are both there with my luggage. If, knowing this, you no longer wish——"

She interrupted me with a laugh.

"I thought there was something you were holding back," she said. "But—just the same—I propose to employ you. I will advance you a month's

wages to overcome this difficulty, so you need worry no more over that."

Then and there she opened the purse that had been resting in her lap and took from it six hundred francs.

"That," she said, "is what I agreed to pay the man we left behind—that and his board and lodging. The hotel where we stop has chcauffeurs' quarters."

"Aren't you afraid I'll not work the month out?" I asked. "You are taking some risk with a stranger."

"Perhaps," she admitted. "But I don't think that is the case with you, or I shouldn't pay the advance."

"I'll promise to work the month out," I said, quite impressed by her confidence in me.

CHAPTER V.

HEARD BY CHANCE.

BIARRITZ, with its beautiful coast and its highly modern shops, fine residences and huge hotels opened out before us, and I was duly registered as the chauffeur of the Contessa Amparra de Rios y Ruiz. In the garage to which I was directed "Lock-up No. 13" was pointed out to me. I smiled to myself, thinking that for me that number had always been lucky.

No one paid any attention to me when I found the key that Guadalupe Amardo had given me, opened up the big steel screen and backed the Hispano inside. The garage was huge and, at that hour of the day, busy with a little army of chauffeurs moving here and there, or working over their charges. A foreman bustled up and said, "Are you permanent with Mademoiselle la Contessa?" and, when I said, "Yes," glanced over the car.

"She'll need a washup. Mademoiselle always has us do that for her man, so I suppose the same rule goes?"

"If that's the custom with her, of course," I assented, glad to be relieved of a job of work that for a tired man isn't exactly pleasant.

An immaculately uniformed man came up while we talked. I thought he stared at me rather peculiarly. When the foreman had bustled away to answer another call, the lounger asked in a voice that was extraordinary high, and yet hoarse, as if from some injury:

"Did I hear you say that you've got the car of the Contessa Ruiz?"

"Yes," I replied.

"When did you take it over, and where's Guadalupe Amardo?" he asked.

"Broke a wrist down in Spain and I took the job to-day," I answered, thinking that it was merely chauffeur's gossip and that, inasmuch as these men might be my associates for at least a month, it was as well to be friendly.

"We're in the same outfit then," he said. "My name is Marnier—Georges Marnier—and I drive her father's car, that Rolls over there in No. 22. That is, I'm one of her father's men. He keeps two of us." When I showed no further desire for speech he asked, almost casually: "Did the count or the countess engage you?"

I was a little puzzled by that question, but answered: "The countess."

"Oh!" he said, with an almost imperceptible shrug. "Then perhaps you'll not stay long." With a laugh, he turned and sauntered away.

It was on my lips to call after him: "What do you mean by that?" for both his manner and words had been somewhat annoying; but I refrained and thought to myself: "If there's something here I don't understand, my bucko, or if you think you're going to horn me out of this job to get one of your frog pals in, it's up to me to keep an eye on you."

I went out, found the post office and phoned the Bordeaux hotel for my bill and told them to pack and forward my belongings to the Biarritz Hotel and that I was remitting them the cash. This done, I bought a few things tc

carry me over, and with the parcel in my hand returned to the hotel and the "service entrance." I grinned to myself over the fact that this was the first time I had ever entered a hotel through the back door and had come down to a menial position. I thought of that big sum of money I could accept, and wouldn't, and felt somewhat proud of my stubbornness and independence.

The very important underling who herded the hired hands told me that he would see what rooms in the chauffeurs' annex were unoccupied, and finally sent a boy to show me No. 14. I noticed with contempt that there was no No. 13, indicating that perhaps the average driver might be superstitious and the risk of hurting his feelings had been thus adroitly obviated. My room was good enough and the place didn't seem crowded.

I observed, however, that No. 14 seemed rather small and that it looked to have been originally part of a larger room cut in half. I inspected the wall between it and the adjoining No. 12, and found the partition to be nothing but matchwood, covered with wall paper. I hoped that my neighbor wasn't addicted to snoring, and in a cheerful mind cleansed myself and donned new underwear and shirt with much satisfaction.

I WAS resting quietly in thought when I heard steps along the hallway, then the turning of the key of No. 12 and the mumbling of a man who seemed in a temper and addicted to talking to himself. Every sound he made was audible. He took off his coat and was evidently preparing for a wash up when other steps sounded in the hall, stopped and were followed by a rap on his door.

"Come in," my neighbor called in Spanish. "Oh, it's you, is it, Georges?"

Then, before the other could reply, he went on: "Shut that door! What do you think of yourself now—you and your damn, blundering, stupid Guadalupe Amardo? I told you I thought the fool didn't know how to drive well enough to pass as a chauffeur and now I hear he smashed a wrist or something—pity it hadn't been his damn neck and the neck of that girl with him!—and she picked up a new man and——"

"Well, we can get rid of him, can't we?" demanded the unmistakable voice of the man who had questioned me in the garage.

"We must. It's dangerous having any but one of our own men handling the contessa's car. God knows what that young fool of a girl might do! She's not with us, I tell you. And her own father is afraid of her. You don't suppose she suspected Amardo and—got rid of him, do you?"

"No, he smashed a wrist all right. He telephoned me from San Doro not more than ten minutes ago and told me how it happened. He doesn't know who this American is, except he seems to be a sort of a hobo who had been out all night and wandered in just in time to take over. But—here's something funny about that chap. He had lost his passport and his clothes were damp as if he'd either fallen into a stream or the sea."

"Into the sea? Can—can it be that he was—— No! That's not possible. Must have been a stream. Besides, an American—— No, there's nothing to be afraid of in him, but he must go. If she won't get rid of him, we must. He might overhear something and—— Does he talk French?"

"Quite well."

"And Spanish?"

"I don't know. I didn't try him out."

"Shows again how shortsighted you are! You should have found that out, too, while you were about it. Ummh! Awkward! Not sure that it might be

wise to find out what we can about that fellow. No sense in taking any risks at this stage of things. If he got to know too much——"

The shrill-voiced man laughed mirthlessly and quoted Cervantes, *"Si da el cantaro en la piedra o la piedra en el cantaro, mal para el cantaro."* (If the pitcher knocks the stone, or the stone knocks the pitcher, it is equally bad for the pitcher.)

There might be nothing in this evidence of more culture than falls to the credit of the average chauffeur, Basque presumably, for the name was either French or Basque and many of the Basques speak fluent French and Spanish, but I began to wonder what kind of chauffeurs these might be and whether there wasn't more behind their wish to have a friend of their own driving the contessa's car. And why all this solicitude regarding her chauffeur? Why shouldn't she employ whom she chose? What had her actions to do with the two men in the adjoining room, the flimsy partition between which and mine enabled me, with no intent of eavesdropping, to overhear their conversation?

Some of it may have been missed by me while I thought of these things, but the next I heeded was sufficiently personal to demand full attention. It was the shrill-voiced man who spoke.

"Get him out of the way? That's easy. He's got Guadalupe's passport and probably had no driving license. The next time he goes around the corner, I'll arrange that the traffic officer shall hold him up and ask to see it. Having none, he'll not be permitted to continue. That's a simple matter. It may even lead to an investigation as to who and what this fellow is. Bah! Finish!"

"Well," returned the other voice, "that's for you to see to. You're indirectly the cause of his intrusion into our ménage at this time, and it's for you to send him on his way. See that you do so."

A dozen other interchanges of no importance, and Marnier departed. So did I—on tiptoes and with the utmost precautions to move noiselessly. I descended the stairs and slipped outward and then down to the long beach in front of the casino, where I could walk to and fro while considering whether I should keep what I had overheard to myself and let the chauffeurs of this aristocratic family with which I was engaged do their worst, or inform the contessa.

To let them "disengage" me would be the simplest. I would then have ample reason for leaving my employment, a reason which could not but satisfy this girl employer of mine, and then, as soon as I could get in touch with friends and funds, return her the money she had advanced. That would have been the course followed by me, save for that conversation. But the contessa—what of her? She had befriended me, and—I liked her.

There was a will to friendliness about her, a courage, and now a suggestion of a brave young thing who was fighting against odds that were being played underhanded, unscrupulously. The more I thought of this side of the situation, the more I discovered myself angered. I hadn't liked that fellow Marnier when I first sighted him, liked him less when he talked with me and now discovered cause for detestation.

The contemptuous certitude that he would have no difficulty in brushing me out of the way merited a lesson. The greatest difficulty lay with the contessa herself, for she had told me to have the car around in front of the hotel at ten o'clock of the following morning. I considered whether I might tell her I had discovered something out of order that necessitated repairs, and then I saw that this would but play into Marnier's hands, for he might be called

upon to assist, would prove me a liar, and——

Somehow I didn't wish the girl to think I would lie to her, or prove ungrateful for her trust so voluntarily given. Then I saw that the simplest way was the straightest, that she should be warned, that it was in a way a duty to inform her of all that I had overheard. I walked until I came to a quiet little shop, isolated, where there was no customer, no risk of being overheard, and an obliging proprietor readily granted me the use of his telephone.

Fortunately I got into communication with her at once. I begged her pardon for the intrusion and asked if it would be possible for me to have a few minutes' conversation with her in private, where we could be certain of not being overheard.

"It seems a strange request," she said, "and unless it is something of importance and urgent, I should prefer that whatever it is be told me to-morrow."

"I fear that it is both urgent and important," I returned. "I don't consider it wise to tell you over the telephone and, although I may be mistaken, I think it is something you should know."

In that instant the fear came to me that even the girl at the hotel switchboard might hear too much, so I added: "It's about your car. If I could see you for but a moment in the hotel entrance in—say—ten minutes from now why——"

"Yes, that will be all right," she answered. "In ten minutes I can spare a moment, but no more."

I was at the hotel entrance on time. It happened opportunely that no other chauffeur was near when she came out and I spoke rapidly and in a low voice lest the concierge, who was but a few yards distant, might hear.

"I've overheard something that sounds to me like a plot against you—perhaps not—that is for you to judge. I deemed it best to tell you at once and if I go into details it will take too long. That chauffeur you had last was put there by the chauffeur of your father, and they said something that——"

Her eyes flashed and she said: "s-s-st! No more! You have acted with discretion, for reasons you don't know. I will meet you at——" She stopped and drew her smooth brow into tiny frown and it seemed to me that in that moment she was very beautiful, standing there with her blue-black hair parted in the center, drawn straightly and smoothly away around the sides over her well-shaped ears, and with her large, soft eyes staring absently at the sky line.

"Listen," she said, glancing about to make certain that no one was within hearing, and speaking scarcely above a murmur, "I will meet you on the Basta —you can easily find where it is—at ten o'clock to-night. It's impossible for me to get away unobserved before then."

A car drove up, even as she finished speaking, and she ended hastily and returned through the hotel entrance. I sauntered away, wondering where this Basta place might be and resolved to learn before dining. Remembering also that a chauffeur's cap, my only headgear, was a very distinct badge of identity, I stopped at a shop and purchased a hat that, while somewhat extravagant for my means, was satisfactory and would make me less conspicuous.

I reached the Basta Rock long before the time of rendezvous. It was worth a visit; for it is a sheer rock, towering up so close to the mainland that it is an island only at high tide, and it is reached by a bridge, arch-backed, hung up in the air. Out beyond it are other tiny islets, perpetually hammered by the sea and beneath the Basta itself the sea has cut an arch, through which high waves roar with the boom of great cannon.

Steep paths scale to its top and a tiny grove of tamarisks, with their fernlike fronds, give daytime shade for the rustic benches that are cunningly placed here and there, always facing some magnificent view. I found no one there and took a seat looking across the charging waves upon the Port des Pecheurs—the fishermen's port—with its heavy protective walls, against which the waves broke, but left the water within as still as mirrors on which rested the white, graceful shapes of tiny yachts and slender launches.

BEHIND them, at the foot of the cliff, the cottages of the fishermen with their crooked roofs and friendly lights gave an air of homely quietude that was very soothing. At my feet, in the light of a half moon, the cliff sloped away to a sheer edge high above the waves. The wild grass and flowers which covered the slope made one wish to throw himself thereon, as on a bed, and dream. Away outward, on the last visible jut of land confronting the whole width of the Atlantic, stood the Virgin's Rock, and at my back, across the horn of the bay which holds the casino, looking like a splendid column of marble, the lighthouse at intervals sent its great white beam sweeping in a wide circle.

The contessa came so lightly that I did not hear her and was startled when I saw a dark figure, veiled, step to one side and look at me in the light as if to make certain of my identity.

"I didn't recognize you in that hat," she said. Then, almost impatiently and without taking the seat which I proffered with a gesture, she went: "It is against the rigor of Spanish etiquette for a woman to go anywhere at night unattended, so tell me quickly what you overheard."

Without loss of time, and somewhat bluntly, I obeyed; but I had not more than half finished before she herself suggested that we sit down and then, as if the veil were troublesome, withdrew it from her face and, with a single deft motion, as of one habituated to the management of a mantilla, draped it round her head, exposing her clean-cut profile. She did not interrupt me with a question and sat staring across at the fishing village until I had concluded. Even then, for a moment, she sat without speaking.

"You did well," she said, at last, turning to face me. "It confirms something that I have recently suspected. Angrily she continued: "The abominable brutes! And that idiotic, incompetent Amardo! To foist him on me! I knew he was no driver before we had driven a dozen kilometers." She stopped and drew her arched eyebrows, black as her hair, together thoughtfully, then suddenly asked: "Didn't it enter your mind that, if you said nothing, this would be an easy, profitable and blameless means of leaving my service?"

"Certainly," I replied.

"And yet you chose to stay. Why? I am curious as to that."

"Well, if you wish to know—— Because it didn't seem a very manly game they were playing against a woman and, knowing what I did, it would have been even more contemptible for me to leave you when you stood in need of loyalty. Particularly so after your kindness and trust. No, I'm going to continue to be your chauffeur, if you wish, in spite of all that precious pair can do and—— Well, we'll see."

She started to say something, checked herself and, becoming practical, remarked:

"Of course you must not take the car out to-morrow. That, I can observe, is one of your reasons for warning me. Also, if your belongings arrive to-morrow as you anticipate, we may fool the police by satisfying them as to your credentials when next we drive."

"My credentials," I assured her, "are adequate."

But this did not appear to be the direction of her meditations, which became somewhat prolonged, considering her previous admonition to haste. Indeed, she seemed troubled while she sat there, with eyes occasionally moving from point to point of those exquisite surroundings. Waiting, I fell to watching the crests of the waves that were like sprayed silver when they tore upward over the tops of the outlying rocks. I was surprised by the course of her thoughts when she spoke. She turned on the bench to face me and bent forward a trifle in her earnestness.

"There's one thing I must warn you," she said, "for not to do so would be unfair. This position of yours may become very dangerous. Your loyalty to me may, if things go wrong, cost you much. Perhaps your very life! I wish I could tell you all. Oh, I do! But I daren't. But I can tell you this: That there are men involved in this affair who would not hesitate, for a moment, to kill you.

"They would be risking their own lives," she went on, "if they suspected you of—of being other than merely my chauffeur and a man in complete ignorance of their projects. I need a friend who is dependable and courageous. Heaven knows I do! But it seems a pity to endanger one who, from no other motive than fair play to a chance employer, has become innocently involved."

"Is it as serious as that?" I blurted, astonished by her words and wondering as to what she referred.

"It is, Mr. Ives." I was gratified by that "Mister," for it indicated that my footing had changed from that of mere servant. "And, knowing this, and that for the present I can't tell you more, do you still wish to continue your work? Wait a moment, please, before you answer! For I wish to add that I shall not blame you in the least, not the very least, if you decline."

"But you need me!" I said. "And so—I shall continue until you tell me the need no longer exists."

Her hands moved forward impulsively, and for an instant I thought she was going to clasp mine, then, as if habit restrained her to reserve, she said:

"I am very grateful to you. More than I can say. And I hope that you do not suffer for your—your friendship. If you do, you will remember that I warned you; but you shall also remember that I shall be personally very, very grieved."

She arose and without another word turned, waved her hand to me as a signal, I thought, to remain behind for a few minutes and from the other side of the little cliff I watched her cross the bridge, regain the boulevard and move quietly away toward the shining esplanade that in a long crescent led toward the glittering casino and her hotel.

Then I laughed at myself for my folly; for I knew that I had ardently wished I could be of such service as would entitle me to a somewhat higher status in her regard than merely that of a loyal chauffeur driving her car.

CHAPTER VI.

A RUN OF LUCK.

A SOLDIER'S uniform is distasteful enough to one who detests uniforms of any kind, but a chauffeur's livery is considerably worse. Hence I was never happier in my life than when my luggage from Bordeaux reached me on the following afternoon. I felt many degrees less conspicuous when, wearing evening clothes that might have originally cost more than any self-respecting chauffeur would pay, I strolled toward the casino. It was in my mind that I would visit it this once, before I

became known as a chauffeur out on a holiday. I felt that I wanted one night's entertainment as a visiting tourist, before I settled to my new status.

The show in the music hall was—just indifferent—neither bad nor good. The *boule* tables were patronized, as in all casinos in France, by the boobs who couldn't reason out that the percentages were hopelessly against them, or did not know that there are but few casinos in France where the profits from the *boule* tables alone do not pay all the expenses and thereto add a generous profit.

ARMED with my passport I indulged in a night's ticket for the baccarat rooms and was glad that I was in evening dress when I saw the patrons therein. I had not hitherto recalled the fact that Biarritz in its highest season is patronized quite largely by Spaniards of the wealthier classes and millionaires from Argentina who can certainly give all the rest of the world lessons in the art of squandering fortunes without pain, but with ostentation.

The baccarat room was filled with them and with handsome women. Looking about to make certain that there was no one there whom I knew, or who might recognize me, and discovering none, I enjoyed myself, totally forgetting that I was a chauffeur with barely twenty-five dollars' worth of francs left in my pocket. Before I knew it, I was punting and never in my life had luck run so persistently my way.

The crowd began to thin slightly and I gained a seat at a table, not realizing until I had taken it that it was the most expensive of any and that its bank demanded one hundred louis, the equivalent of about one hundred dollars. I had a mental tremor, but was ashamed to get up and leave without a single play, so tried to suppress my inclination to bolt like a frightened horse and again punted, while the "shoe" went its slow way around the upper end of the table, reached the dealer, and at last was pushed by my neighbor into my reach.

I took it and recklessly plunged. An Argentine with diamond shirt studs in a silk smoker shirt promptly called "Banco!" thus shutting the other players out. He actually turned and talked as I drew the cards, as if my little lot weren't worth considering. I won and promptly again he called the lot. And with that same air of disdain he continued conversation with a much-too-elaborate Spanish demimondaine at his elbow.

Again I won, hesitated, thought the bank might run in my favor once more, and again he bet against it all and lost. By this time I was ready to take down my bank and winnings and pass the shoe to the next at my right; but the Argentine muttered, nonchalantly, but so that the entire end of the table might hear: "Oh, I see! He hasn't got the nerve!"

My already reaching hand came back like a flash and I nodded at him.

"Banco!" he called, and lost.

Again I nodded him a challenge, he went banco, and by now even his attention was secured; for my bank was up to sixteen hundred dollars. He lost and called, "Again, monsieur?"

For reply I dealt the cards and—won. Once again he challenged me, but I hesitated with all that little fortune in front of me, paused to consider, observed that the eyes of all the players were upon us and that a crowd had collected behind the seated players, including myself, as if the news that a battle royal was on with this high gambler from Argentina had proven a magnet.

Suddenly from behind me I heard in low voice: "Accept, monsieur! *Acceptez vous!*"

Taking this as lucky advice, I did, and again won. Thirty-two hundred

dollars was there on the table before me, and still that smiling devil from Argentina wasn't satisfied. And again I hesitated and again was admonished by my unknown mascot behind: *"Acceptez vous,* monsieur!"

I will admit that I was not gambler enough to turn two cards for a stake like that in my needy circumstances without a tremor. I don't think my hands trembled when I pulled his cards and mine from the sabot, but it required all the nerve I had in store to prevent such a display. I would have given half that bank to have escaped. Nothing but a more or less angry defiance kept me steady, and I thoroughly expected after such a long run to lose. I felt that I was the worst lunatic at large, but it was neck or nothing now and my fingers drew my opponent's and my cards, anticipating the worst.

"Neuf!" he called, and with an air of triumph threw face upward a five and a four of hearts, the prized number nine, or "baccarat."

Slowly I faced the first card in front of me, a six of hearts, then the decisive card and a babel of excitement went round the table for I, too, had drawn a "baccarat" with a trey of clubs. A tie!

Again the expectancy and strain hushed everything. Once more I drew the cards. Instantly the babel became loud and sharp to my ears, for I had won, and now had approximately six thousand four hundred dollars piled up there in a great heap of wealth. The Argentine smiled, was as calm as if such a loss meant nothing more to him than pocket change, and called:

"Am I to have the pleasure again, monsieur?"

The urgent voice of my mascot was again musically in my ear, but this time in English. "No, no, Mr. Ives! Tell him 'No,' and take down your bank!"

I thrust the shoe to the dealer, to be duly auctioned and sold to the next one desiring to participate in that marvelous run, heard the Argentine bidding for it and, with the huge heap of checks, less the banker's deductions, in my hands, looked around to see my unknown benefactor.

The contessa, gravely smiling, was just moving away, and I did not hear but saw her lips form the word, "Congratulations!" before she was swallowed in the crowd.

WITHOUT further ado, I took my winnings and went to the cashier's desk, walking easily now and endeavoring not to appear either elated or hurried. For a moment the eyes of many were turned on me enviously, then I was forgotten in the excitement of the play, where the Argentine had lost in his very first turn with the shoe. I had quit at exactly the right time, and my bank had run the very limit of the cards.

A too-beautiful young woman in immaculate gown and wearing too-fabulous jewels simpered at me and threw languishing glances of invitation. Another beckoned to me with her fan. I had suddenly become popular—amazingly so. There were plenty of charming persons ready to relieve me of my loneliness or—perhaps it is better to say—of my winnings, but of them I wanted nothing. I was too absorbed in realizing that financially I was again more than solvent and, most of all, in wondering what the contessa would think of my appearing there in evening dress and of why she had been so eager for me to win.

I walked out of the baccarat room trying to appear as if there was nothing unusual in my winning—or losing—sixty-four hundred dollars. Once its doors had swung behind me, I was no longer a person of interest. I strolled slowly past the big and ornate café, across the lobby with its palms and now half-deserted *boule* tables and down the

open border of the ballroom toward the cloakroom and exit.

For a moment I wished, in that exultant night, that there was some one I knew with whom I could dance, for the great floor was in rhythmical movement, the band excellent, and all the huge array of tables at the sides occupied and attractive with white napery, glistening glass and the familiar little silver pails holding in their iced depths the champagne of France. I felt that I would like to celebrate my luck with just one little bottle of any good brand if I had any friend with whom to share it, but there was none.

Also, I thought that if my contessa were there, she might deem it an impertinence in me, her chauffeur, to mingle thus democratically in a room devoted to her kind and their friends. No, it wouldn't do. I must go. Just then, as I began moving slowly toward the swinging doors, a hand clapped me on the back and an astonished voice cried:

"Johnny Ives! By all that's certain. 'Boxer Johnny!'"

Before I could turn, the sound of that old familiar nickname breathed of the days of "Old Eli," of her gymnasiums and her football teams and—— It was Tillbury Holmes, fat, placid, old "Tilly" who was born fat and, being the prospective inheritor of millions, disdained work or exercise, but lazily encouraged all sports.

"For the love of Mike, Johnny!" he shouted. "What are you doing here in Biarritz? Come over here and sit down. I'm at a table with some friends from Madrid where I've been loafing for some months. Come on and meet 'em——" he insisted. "I know you talk Spanish because—remember that little Cuban don, who, when he first came to Yale, used to follow you around as if you were sent from Heaven to comfort a homesick little foreigner? He's in Madrid now. No end of a swell. Got to be a marquis or something of that sort, and he's sitting over there just two tables from mine and—— There he is now! Hey! Montori! Montori! Look who's here!"

In the excitement of that unexpected meeting, I forgot that I was nothing but a chauffeur. Ten years were being wiped out as if time, relenting, had thrust a wet sponge over his insatiable slate. I'd gone back to the only days of glory I'd ever known, when, owing to an unearned but natural physical ability, I'd been something of an athletic star at Yale.

IT hadn't entered my youthful head in college that to be an athletic hero didn't signify that one would prove an athlete when it came to making a living, that cups are nice things but of no importance, that being an "all-round" in athletics is no indication that one is going to be an anything at all when he goes out to "hustle on his own."

"Monty," whom I always liked and who had a foolish sort of admiration for me, was pumping one of my hands in both his, and, in his excitement, mixing Spanish, French and English in babbled greeting. I hadn't found room for a dozen words between his and Tilly's cyclonic reception. I forgot that but a few days previously I had been a homeless, desperate tramp, owing a hotel bill which I couldn't immediately pay, and that now I had assumed and was obligated to a car. This is the only excuse I can offer for what followed—forgetfulness. One gets habits and, I suppose, follows them.

So we three, with myself in the center as if my old friends were afraid that I was going to escape, and each with an arm linked in mine on either side, strolled across the ballroom in an interval, and I was introduced, somewhat ebulliently to Tilly's friends and a fresh glass was brought and I had to

request him to talk of something other than myself.

The band resumed and I danced, danced as one does who has several thousand dollars in his pockets which he'd never expected to have, and is no longer an outcast, a baggage porter or —say a stowaway in a felon ship, or crawling along a cavern ledge fearful for his life, or driving the car of an unknown but charming contessa of proud old Spain.

Then Monty insisted on my coming to his table and, still forgetting, I went and met his mother, who graciously assured me that she had always longed to know me and could never repay me for the kindliness and friendship I had shown for her son and of which he so often wrote and talked in his trying "foreign" days. Monty's sister was a duchess, and she and I danced a tango.

I suppose that from the Spanish outlook I did it none too well, lacking the requisite sedateness, the correct and inimitable short steps timed to bodily rhythm, the gravity of a great undertaking. She was too gracious to be unflattering and we were returning to our seats at the table when my glance, casually roving, fell upon another tabled party, and—there, gravely regarding me, with deep-blue eyes, sat the Contessa Amparra.

Consternation laid its grip upon me like the hand of a ghost at a banquet. What in the name of the evoked judge of men could she think of me? Would she think that I was a pretender, or another of those enemies which she had intimated surrounded her? And suddenly I was impressed, profoundly so, with the conviction that her esteem meant much to me.

I dared not look at her. I shriveled in thought. The consequences of this night might estrange our peculiar relationship and rob her of that trust of which, but a short day ago, there in the moonlight on the Basta Rock, she seemed gladly to give. Somewhat hastily I made excuses for departure and explained that, inasmuch as I was leaving early in the morning for Pau, it would be impossible to fix another date of meeting until after my return.

The contessa was not looking in my direction when I bade my friends good night, but appeared to be frowningly absorbed in studying the lights above the musicians' heads.

I succeeded in gaining my room in the hotel without meeting any of my fellow chauffeurs and, making as little noise as possible, undressed. It was my wish to leave my neighbors in ignorance that room No. 14 was occupied. From the fact that with it as a listening post I had overheard enough to warn me, I esteemed it a lucky chamber and wished to keep it so.

But when, after hiding my fortune between the mattresses, I went to bed, I could not but wonder if the following day might not find me discharged. The contessa would be justified, but—was it merely the excitement of watching play for big stakes that had impelled her to give me advice there at baccarat?

IN the morning, before any other chauffeurs were up, I was in their dining room, wearing my livery, and enjoying a very good breakfast. I had nearly finished when another man in livery arrived, merely glanced at me, as if I were of no particular interest, and began to eat. He was a heavy-browed, surly-looking individual and his lack of friendliness and interest did not in the least disturb me. Almost as I was rising to leave, the chauffeur from the front part of the hotel came in and asked if I was Ives, the chauffeur for the Contessa de Ruiz.

When I answered, "Yes," I saw the other man suddenly lower his knife and fork and look up at me with a fixed, appraising stare, as if now he wished to inspect me.

"The contessa wishes you to have the car at the main entrance at nine o'clock sharp," the boy said. When I answered, "Understood. I shall be there," he bolted from the door like a rabbit. The man at the table resumed his knife and fork, but still said nothing.

I stepped out into the hallway to get my cap, remembered that I had left my gloves in my room and hastily went up the stairs to get them, passing as I did so a hall telephone on the ground floor. The stairs had a turning, and it was when I had quietly got my gloves, locked my room door and was descending that I heard a voice below, using the telephone. My own name was what halted me and I heard:

"Yes, Ives is the name he answered to and he's going to take the girl out at nine o'clock, so Marnier had best hurry over to the point policeman, if he wants to get his work in quickly. He will go out from the main entrance, not the side one, so the traffic man can get him there."

I waited quietly on the stairs until the speaker had hung up the telephone, leaned over to identify him and discovered that he was the man who had been having breakfast at the same time I had. But I was certain that his was not the gruff voice of the man in No. 12, and thought to myself:

"So I'm to be watched by at least three, am I? Wonder where this last chap gets off? Also, to whom was he talking? Are there more than three?"

Just as I was getting my car ready, he came into the garage. He walked past with nothing more than a side glance and went into another lock-up, where he began calling for various supplies, and was still there when I drove out.

I was at the grand entrance on time, wondering what the outcome of the meeting might be; but the contessa came out as calmly as if she had never seen me outside of livery. As I closed the door upon her, she ordered me to drive to Hossegor, explaining meanwhile that to reach it I must pass through Bayonne and thence travel northward.

"I will call you directions," she said, as I started the car and we drove away.

We slid down the long paved road to the huge iron gates, waited a moment for them to be opened and then out into the road. A traffic officer was at his post less than fifty yards away, and I wondered, as we approached him, if he was the one who had been selected for the holdup and if Marnier had got word to him in time.

I slowed down a little to give him ample opportunity to act and then—up went his hand.

"What is it you wish?" the contessa demanded, before I could speak.

"I must see your man's driving license and his passport if he is foreign," the officer growled, with all the immense dignity and importance which a uniform sometimes gives its wearer.

"But this is the first time my car has been stopped for such an absurdity," the contessa remarked.

"That makes no difference, mademoiselle," the officer grunted. In the meantime, I had my papers out and passed them to him, together with a Parisian identity card and a card from Bordeaux. He glared at them one by one and seemed vastly disappointed.

"Yes," he said, with an air of reluctant admission, "your papers are all in order. You may drive on."

"May I ask," I said sweetly, "if any one called your attention to me in particular."

"That's none of your business," he jerked out, as if it hurt him to speak.

Then, when I slowly and deliberately laughed at him, his cup of fury was overflowing, he puffed and swelled himself up like a big frog, sputtered and finally turned and walked away.

"Disappointment No. 1!" I heard the

contessa exclaim, and I thought there was something like a note of laughter in her voice.

Just then a huge Rolls swept past us, and I caught first the stare of the chauffeur and then of his passenger. The latter thrust his head out of the window so that I had a full view of his white hair, heavily jowled face, hard blue eyes glaring from beneath shaggy, white eyebrows, his close-clipped white mustache, and—I knew him.

I saw that the contessa had at the same moment drawn back as if to hide herself in the far corner of the car. Then, an instant later, she was asking, almost in my ear:

"Did you see that man in the other car? I wish you to remember his face. I will tell you why, when we get a chance."

Remember his face? I was amused. As if I could ever forget the face of my father's worst enemy! Suddenly also I remembered having seen that car before. It was the one we had followed in San Sebastin. I drove through Bayonne and out on to the smooth North Road, thinking only of the strange coincidence that William Carson was here, where I least expected to see him.

It brought back the very homely past when my father, an oil driller, brought his family to Oklahoma and I, a small boy, knew nothing but the excitement and gossip of gushers and dusters and saw many things that weren't particularly uplifting for a boy to see—lynchings, brawls, debaucheries—everything that was to be seen in the ferment of a new oil strike. And Carson was there, a fantastic and muchly participating figure.

He was not then Mr. William Carson, but "Midnight" Carson, a sobriquet won because he ran a gambling house whose busy hours began at midnight. Later this nickname became more firmly fixed, because he foreclosed mortgages at one minute after midnight. He prospered. He had a hand in many deals that weren't always clean. He became the local political boss and for a time ran the town.

Men might rebel and there were numerous bold spirits to defy his rule, but in a country where the majority rules he seemed always to have the majority with him. It consisted of oil sharks, repeaters, gamblers, murderers, holdups and landlords whom he controlled with no gentle hand. There were rumors of what happened to those who too vigorously opposed him—after they were found dead. There were stories of his personal courage, his quickness with firearms, his physical strength, fistic celerity and remorseless methods of gain.

THEN came a time when, with the advent of better men, he lost his control and sought new fields. Rumor carried gossip of his advancement, first in the Texas fields, then among Mexican spouters and finally from California, where he controlled an entire district. He arose from the plane of local scandals to those of national disturbance, but always escaped punishment. Then came a period of total eclipse, indicating retirement, seclusion, the wish to be forgotten.

But I had not forgotten him. Not in the least, for my father had been one of those sturdy rebels who had suffered loss, time and again, until Carson shifted his base, after which, by skill and fortune, my father prospered in his small way. But what on earth was Carson doing in the utmost and quietest corner of France? Why had my employer marked him down? Why did she perhaps fear him?

These thoughts were in my head when, obedient to an order from the rear, I swung out of the main thoroughfare toward a bay on the shores of which stood an old inn facing the water, from

which it was separated by a lawn. There were big trees to give shade, rustic chairs and tables and, at that hour, not another patron.

I jumped down, opened the door and stood respectfully to one side. The contessa alighted, looked around, seemed satisfied with the isolation and, as she walked away, said:

"Come with me, please."

She reached a bench at the water's edge and gestured to a chair which stood on the opposite side of a table.

"You may sit down," she said, and then went on, before I had fully recovered or obeyed: "What excuse have you to offer for yourself, Mr. John Ives? Why the masquerade? I ask you to tell me, frankly, if you are in the employ of that man—that unspeakable old devil!—Carson? But, after all," she continued, with rising anger, "why should I ask you to be frank? Because if you are working for him, you would undoubtedly deny it and lie, just as all his other tools do! Perhaps it's better and simpler to ask why a man of your kind accepts such employment!"

Somewhat overwhelmed, I couldn't immediately reply. The contessa accepted this as an evidence of confusion. There was a vast scorn emanating from her, while I sat, thinking what to say.

"The one feature I can't understand," she said, as if puzzled by my silence and determined to probe to the bottom of her difficulties, "is why you got me to come to the Basta to spin that elaborate yarn! The plan for your opportune employment was enough. Did you wish to make a fool of me for your own amusement?"

Exasperated by her cruelty, I said: "I thought of nothing but you, of your need for protection. If you think I am in any way a tool of Midnight Carson's, you blunder, for any enemy of his is a friend of mine!"

Whether she doubted this was not made plain by her next question. "Then if you are not in this conspiracy, why did you hire yourself out to me as a driver?"

"Because I was penniless when I first saw you."

"Isn't it rather peculiar for me to pick up in an out-of-the-way place in Spain a man who but two nights later appears in the baccarat room of a casino in evening dress and who, with the indifference of one accustomed to handling considerable sums of money, wins nearly a hundred thousand francs, and yet on the following day resumes chauffeur's livery?"

I could discern perplexity in her manner and voice.

"Yes, it is," I admitted, and then, to save my situation, couldn't help laughing. It annoyed her.

"Are you going to tell me what you mean by such actions, or why, if money was the sole reason for your accepting opportune employment, you continue in it? It doesn't seem reasonable!"

"First," I replied, "it's perhaps as well to tell you exactly who I am——"

"You don't need to tell me who you are. I know!" she interrupted. "It happens that at least one of your admiring friends is an old friend of mine, and if you were the fair, honest gentleman they think you to be——"

"I ask you to believe—just that, and let me explain. It may sound incredible, but on my word of honor, I'll tell you the truth. If after that I can be of further use to you as your chauffeur, or in any other capacity, I shall still be your—er—hired man."

CHAPTER VII.

STARTLING NEWS.

"SINCE you know about me from Monty and Tilly," I began, and then corrected myself by giving them their proper names, "I'll explain how I happened to be broke and there in that

village." Briefly I told her the truth, ending with: "The rest of it you know."

She was now weighing my words and impressed thereby. There was a thoughtful pause before she next asked: "But how do you come to know this man Carson?"

She seemed further impressed and convinced of my honesty when I told her all of Carson's past. At least, there was less of doubt in her face as she sat there, with the sun making a lace-work of shadows through the trees and picking up glints from the water out beyond our feet, while I watched her with a great desire to win her approval and friendship. I wondered at myself for being so enamored, but the circumstances of our meeting and the subsequent events may have exerted a strange influence upon me.

Her evident distress from the moment of our meeting, her courage, her apparent lonely situation of a young woman, scarcely more than a girl, fighting against some—to me unknown—odds, would have enlisted my support and interest had I been anything better than a wooden man. But there was something above all this about her personality, nothing explicable—one doesn't know after all why one is, or is not, attracted and held!—which made me positively yearn to assist her.

I don't know how long we had been sitting there silently before I became aware of the lapse and, to break it, said: "So it was really the *Marie Etienne* and her smuggling crew that were the cause of my being there in that village."

If I had slapped her, she couldn't have been more startled.

"*Marie Etienne!* Was that the name of the ship you were on? And they were—what were they smuggling?"

"Rifles, ammunition and bombs," I answered, staring at her, and saw her go white, clutch her slender fingers together and catch her breath.

"And how far do you think that cavern was from the village where I first saw you?"

There was now a more pronounced anxiety, or apprehension, in her voice. I sat and reviewed the circumstances of that night of wandering, my fatigue, weakness and, as nearly as possible, brought to recollection the route I had taken, the time I had lost washing, the length of time consumed with the goat-herd and tried to estimate the number of miles I had traveled.

"Probably about four miles in a southwesterly direction," I replied.

"Then either it's on, or very near, the border of our own estate!" she exclaimed. "And that means—— Oh, it's what I suspected and what I feared and tried to avert! And what am I to do! What *am* I to do!"

She was not the weeping type of woman. More like the old Toledo blades of her own land, blades that bent in stress of conflict, but never broke. She bent now in the stress of some inward emotion, but did not yield a tear. I think it was in that moment of her palpable distress that my heart went out to her unconditionally, but aching to shield and comfort.

Her hands had fallen with tragic helplessness on the top of the little table, clutched, wringing themselves in despair. Risking much, but acting only as I felt, I put my own hands out and covered them. In her distress she did not seem to be aware of the contact, but looked up at me, with a tragic misery in her eyes.

"Listen!" I said. "Why not trust me? If there's anything I can do to help you, or if I could advise you, please let me! You are in great trouble, I am certain, and trouble of any sort is lessened when shared with one who honestly wishes to be a friend. Can't you tell me what it is?"

She withdrew her hands, as if suddenly conscious of my familiarity,

though not with indignation, or haste, but slowly, as if reluctant to make me, after such a few days' acquaintanceship, her confidant. Our eyes met and I felt that she was probing me as if to learn, through her feminine intuition, the truth, or whether I was genuinely her friend.

SHE must have discovered something of which I was not aware, for abruptly she looked away and a faint flush came and went while I waited to learn whether she intended to take me into full confidence. Then, suddenly, still looking away into the distance, she said:

"Yes, I can trust you, and if you think of any way to help me, I shall be grateful, more than grateful!"

She looked around as if to reassure herself that we were beyond earshot of any one. Instinctively feeling that I was on the verge of a secret, I did likewise. Save for a man working at the stables off to one side of the inn, who whistled as he worked, and whose little Basque cap was cocked jauntily over one ear, there was none in sight.

"My father," she said, "is one of the finest men that ever lived and—— It's on his account that I am worried and have been worried, for some time. Do you know anything about Spanish politics?"

"No, or at least very little," I answered. "I know there is some unrest there and some dissatisfaction over that Moroccan War and the big expenditure that seems somewhat useless and a waste."

She frowned a trifle at my words and studied me again, and I wondered whether I had made a mistake of some character unknown. For a moment I thought her secret troubles weren't to be confided.

"I don't know how I have blundered," I said, smiling at her, "but you look to me as if I had said something you didn't like. If it's about politics, I can assure you that I haven't the slightest concern in such, for one side or the other."

She looked relieved, and thoughtful, and finally said: "No, I'm certain that you haven't and—from all I've heard of you—that you can be trusted. You will see why I can't go to any of my own people for advice, when I tell you that I have become convinced, since we have been sitting here, that my father is involved in a revolutionary conspiracy that, if it fails, may cost his life or his banishment. If it succeeds, it will mean nothing but endless worry and, probably in the end, another failure."

"You became convinced of this since we have been sitting here, and—— I don't understand," I said. "But, of course, if you are certain of this, I can see why you are worried. Also why it would be difficult for you to tell any Spaniard—man or woman."

"Oh, I am positive, now!" she said, shaking her head to emphasize her point. "To begin with, the *Marie Etienne* and her cargo and where it was landed—— It's what I feared and but half suspected all the time! And now you confirm it! It—it ties things up and makes me understand much that I've only guessed at."

With an explosive little gesture, she exlaimed: "It's all the fault of that man Carson! How I hate him!"

"I can't say that I hate him, but I can assure you that I share your dislike for him," I heartily assented. "And if he is mixed up in this affair, you may be certain there is something behind it that won't stand much sunlight."

"Mixed up in it? Why, he's the cause of it!" she asserted. "I'll have to tell you a lot of things that mayn't interest you, to prove what I say."

She looked around again, to make certain that we were still alone, and

then, leaning her elbows on the table, gave her explanation.

"My father is one of the old conservatives of Spain. Our house has always been conservative—for more than four hundred years! But, although he disapproved of many things political, particularly of the Moroccan War, he kept his own counsel and merely stood aloof until this man Carson came along. Carson wants concessions of some kind that I am not certain of—that is, whether its mining, or oil boring—or —in any case, it's something. And he is to get those concessions if this revolution succeeds and a party headed by my father gets into power.

"I've learned all this," she went on, "from a dozen or so little things—a few sentences overheard here and there, a few indiscreet remarks made by my father and others. These revolutionaries had been lacking one chief and important factor, a man of one of the old families to head them. If they could get even a figurehead, to prove to the people that some of the old nobility disapproved of the present government's policies, and to the outside world that it wasn't simply a bolshevist upheaval, but a sane and ordered revolt, their chances for success were infinitely greater.

"Our family is one of the best known in Spain," she continued. "So this man Carson, who had failed to get what he wanted from the present government, quietly backs up the revolution, with the understanding that if it succeeds he gets what he wants. He got men to approach my father, and some of them were quite well known. Some ex-journalists, an exiled duke, a distinguished and able public man who came from the ranks of the people, and—although my father hesitated and I hoped wouldn't become involved—he finally joined in with them.

"I don't know how far he has gone. I wish I did. Neither Esmerelda nor I can learn, although we have both tried. But I do know that there have been mysterious meetings and that finally Carson got such influence over my father that they were always together and that many men came to see them at all hours and that Carson's money has been spent in big sums. I tried to get into my father's confidence, when I saw how he was being worried, and—couldn't!

HE was kind, as always. And he kept telling me not to bother my head over things that didn't concern women and—— But all the time he kept going in deeper and at last got angry with me when I came out and accused him of being in a conspiracy. He told me that if he had reason to believe that I was inquisitive again, he would pack me off—that's what he said! 'Pack you off!'—to an aunt who lives in an awful little village, in Belgium, and see that I was kept there.

"I kept on hoping that nothing would come of this conspiracy, that it would fall through, as most such do, that my father would come to his senses. But it was useless, because that man Carson keeps it alive, stirring, progressing. He goes here, he goes there, plotting, scheming, talking, persuading. I overheard him and father discussing a point on our coast and the name *Marie Etienne*. And I could learn nothing of what this signified, until you told me of your escape from that ship.

"I went to our home to see if I could learn anything there, but couldn't. It was on my return that I first saw you. I didn't know until then that I was under espionage, so evidently they know that I am against them and wish I could induce my father to have nothing more to do with them. Until you told me of the Marnier affair, I didn't know how closely every corner is being watched."

"But," said I, "suppose the revolu-

tion succeeds on a—let's say Mussolini plan—and any wise person knows that he saved Italy—suppose that this proposed revolt comes through and your father becomes, for the time being at least, a dictator, supplanting Rivero, who now runs the show——"

The contessa shook her head in a slow, pathetic gesture, much as one might correct the argument of an erring child.

"You don't know my father," she said. "He has never had to exercise either executive ability or personal authority. He is like so many of us who have been overbred, overfed, wet-and-dry nursed from birth to death—he is impractical. Wholly so! He knows how to be courteous, refined, helpful without patronizing, kindly without familiarity, and—all that; but he doesn't know enough about practical management to run a tiny tobacco shop, where all the goods are marked by the government!

"And for a man of that kind to attempt to run a nation would be absurd. Moreover, don't you see he wouldn't be the man at the head, neither he nor any other Spaniard, but this man Carson! Carson would run him, because Carson would have put him in authority and he would be nothing but Carson's hairbrush to stroke the Castilian locks into the desired form."

"In such an outcome, God help Spain!" I muttered, recalling the methods of this man who was called Midnight Carson, because everything he accomplished was black.

"I must, whatever happens, shield my father," she said.

And for an entirely emotional reason, I suppose, she became in that moment beautiful. There are women like that. Those who, in ordinary, seem quite average in looks and who, until stress brings out the unexpected, don't betray their inward worth. Then those who discover and appreciate will always thereafter see them in the dignity which is theirs and find them beautiful.

"I hadn't seen her father. I doubted his being worthy of such affection; but if she wished to keep him out of what could be, win or lose, a fiasco, she should have my earnest support. Furthermore, had she and hers not been involved, I would cheerfully have done all within my power to play checkmate to Carson's game of Spanish chess.

Considering this, I thought that not infrequently a lone pawn had crossed the essential squares and defeated a well-organized attack. I sat there considering the situation and the methods of a beginning for so long that I have not much idea of time until her voice disturbed me.

"You are a man," she said. "Those who know you well say you are a fighter and that you do things when a game seems lost. Now can you——"

"They flatter me," I interjected, and wondered how far the friendly admiration of Tilly and Monty had led them in speech. "Athletics aren't quite the same as revolutions. But—— It seems to me that the first move is to get possession of that store of arms and bombs and destroy them. Then we can come back and you can probably show a good interference in the game by announcing to your father that that end of the scheme had been smashed.

"If that doesn't stop them—well—we shall have to try something else. Also, it seems essential to me, for your father's welfare, that we, rather than the forces of his majesty, King Alfonso of Spain, discover those stores. They tell me that he is a pretty good sport and, from all I've heard of him, I like him; but there seems to be a few gentlemen working under Rivero who aren't inclined to much sentiment when a revolt is afoot. They would begin by confiscating your father's property, exiling him if they don't catch him, and—executing him if they do. The fact that

the arms were stored there so carefully, rather than issued, indicates to me that they will be there still, that they will not be given out until the very eve of the revolt."

"That's the way I understand it is usually done in our country," she said, as if recalling previous uprisings. "None of our provincial men requires training in the use of firearms. He handles them from infancy. No, I'm certain that your surmise in that respect is correct. The arms will not be handed out until the very last minute and when all is ready to strike."

"Then," said I, "what else can we do at the moment but go back there and get that lot and sink it in the sea? Then when we return and you brave your father's disapproval, perhaps he will come to his senses. At least it would cause a delay, and delays, it seems to me, are the most essential means of letting this matter cool off and fade away. The one feature that wears out the enthusiasm of a revolutionist and finally cools him down is a number of delays." Then another thought came, and I said: "But isn't it better that I tell your father, rather than you? He may never forgive you."

"No, no, no! It is I who must tell him. Besides, for you it would be dangerous, as much as your life is worth; while for me it would mean nothing but anger, perhaps being sent away. That I must risk. No, first of all we must destroy that lot of stuff."

She brightened as if, a resolution made, everything but the first action was dismissed. She leaned toward me and for the first time looked as if she really accepted me as her ally.

"It should be easy," she said. "I know that coast pretty well and have a very fair idea where that cave must be. We have a summer home at Molarda. I don't suppose you know the place?"

"No, I have never been there, nor have I heard of it," I answered.

"Well, it is a village that in its season is a bathing resort. A place of summer homes. At this time of the year, it is a gay little town, with a cinema and a tiny casino and—all that. Our home is on its outskirts and we have a boathouse down on the beach, in which there is a motor boat which hasn't been run for more than a year. But it was a good one—when it was bought. One of my father's extravagances.

"If you can run a big motor boat," she continued, "we could go down there without attracting any attention, take it out on the first calm day—and it's most always calm at this time of the year—and I could show you the points on the coast where I think we should search. It would be a long trip, but—— Heavens! We might have to stay away two or three days and nights!"

The conventionalities of her life had but reasserted themselves. She couldn't entirely escape them. They were inbred, ingrained. To be out all night in a motor boat with one or any man was a very serious matter. Very, for if any one ever heard of it, her reputation was gone, finished, irreparably ruined. But tempting as was this project to me, I had an objection which was rather pertinent.

"See here," I said, "I can drive cars, but I don't know any more about a high-powered boat than the man in the moon."

"That's too bad," she remarked, with great disappointment. "If we get a boatman who does know, he might be one of the revolutionaries. Perhaps Esmerelda, whom I trust implicitly, knows some one." She clapped her hands together with a little gesture of inspiration. "I know what we can do! We will get Montori to join with us! He races boats. He knows all about them."

"And if he doesn't," I said, "maybe

Tilly does. He goes in for that sort of thing, if I'm not mistaken." Then, seeing her look of perplexity, I added: "That's the round, fat man you may have seen with the Marquis de Montori, and his name is Tillbury Holmes. He is chump enough to go in for anything that promises adventure. We'll get both him and Monty interested, and —that should be chaperonage enough."

I wondered why she hesitated so long before replying to my suggestion, but her words, slowly spoken, indicated the course of her thoughts.

"I detest the idea of letting any one, and particularly a Spaniard, know of my father's silliness," she said, "but if it must be, I'm certain there's no one in whom I'd confide quicker than Montori. He will certainly understand the situation and I know that he is a loyalist. Also, that he is no politician. Yes, I think we can tell him. And—the sooner, the better. Let us return at once, and I'll find him while you look for your friend Mr. Holmes."

"If they don't care to join us," I assured her, "we can depend on their not betraying what we must tell them. I'll vouch for both in that regard."

And so, intent on our new plan—a plan in which we had come to accept each other as confederates—we drove back to Biarritz, she on the seat by my side until we neared Bayonne, when, at my own suggestion, she took her proper seat in the rear, lest some one observe what might be taken as undue familiarity with a man in livery.

Fortune favored us both, for at four o'clock that afternoon Monty and I met in Tilly's room. I had already broken the news to Tilly before Monty arrived, and Monty's first words showed us that he, too, knew all.

"Nice mix-up that old gink, the Count Ruiz, has got himself into, isn't it? If he weren't the contessa's father, I'd feel inclined to sick the Spanish government onto him; but as it is, and as she told me the whole story in confidence, there's nothing I can do but take a small stack of chips in the game myself," he growled, as he flung himself into a chair after helping himself to one of Tilly's cigars. "But you—Tilly —you big fat slob!—do you realize what you are sticking your nose into? You might get a slug of lead through that tummy of yours before it's finished."

Tilly grinned cheerfully and swore that he wouldn't miss the chance for anything, that he'd always wished for a real adventure although he was no fighting man and was in fact an arrant coward, but that if I was going, as I swore I was, why, he'd take a chance by coming along.

When I, whom the others elected leader of the party, insisted that we must start immediately after dark, Tilly fussed somewhat about losing an appointment with some girl from Boston, but immediately afterward asked me if I thought he should buy a mask and a couple of revolvers, so we knew we could depend on him. We fixed the hour for starting at ten o'clock and the place where they were to be picked up on the outskirts of the town, then parted. I went back to my room in the hotel well satisfied with a propitious beginning.

CHAPTER VIII.

TRICKED!

IT was on my insistence that, when our force was entire that night, I sat alone in front until after we had run through Saint Jean de Luz and thence to Behobie and the frontier. Somewhat fortunately for us, I think, three or four other cars were trailing along behind us and we caught up with another just as we halted before the little gray customhouse. There is a tendency on the part of those officials to hasten matters when there are several cars in waiting, perhaps because at that hour

of the night they wish to get comfortably asleep in their big comfortable chairs, or on their big comfortable benches; but, whatever the reason, the examinations of our passports and cars was of the most perfunctory.

After we had crossed the bridge, undergone the second examination and were told to proceed, we lost no time in getting out of the town. Monty would have taken the front seat by my side, but the contessa insisted that she knew the road much better than he and, being somewhat willful, left the body of the car to the slumbers of the duenna, Tilly and the marquis as we finally settled down to do some hard and fast driving.

The big Hispano seemed as eager as we to be turned loose and I derived considerable satisfaction when I saw the dial show, on long straight stretches, a clean seventy-five miles an hour. I had knowledge of the young lady's nerve, so was not disappointed when she sat there coolly urging me on with a "Now then! Clear road for miles," or cautioned me to slow down for a sweeping turn.

To tell the truth, I was somewhat chagrined because she didn't talk more; but for hours she sat speechless save for those occasional road directions. Now and then we could hear Monty's and Tilly's voices behind, becoming constantly more drowsy, until their silence assured us that they had fallen asleep. Esmerelda throughout seemed to have maintained a perhaps scornful silence.

"Slow down. Now turn there to the left," the contessa commanded, as we crossed the bridge leading into San Sebastin, that summer home of royalty, whose broad streets at this hour of the night appeared still alive.

A clock with a flaming eye looked down on us and I saw it was a quarter past two and was pleased with my running.

I heard a car behind and leaned out to look back. As I did so I became aware that the duenna was doing the same. In the dim light her firm, clean profile showed plainly. The blaze of the headlights behind made it more distinct. It showed her finely formed but heavy eyebrows contracted into a frown and her well-shaped lips parted above her regular teeth.

ONE can't account for uncorrelated thoughts, but in that instant it came to me that I shouldn't like to have the duenna against me, that she was a woman who would dare, a woman who could be firm and unrelenting when need arose, that if those in the car behind were inimical she wouldn't have hesitated to throw a live bomb in their path.

The car behind turned off into another street and Esmerelda's face vanished from view; but my mind was on her as the little contessa by my side settled deeper into her seat and said:

"Over that way to the Spanish Corniche—and now it is easy going."

"Your duenna seems to be watchful," I said tentatively, after we had cleared the sights of San Sebastin. "I saw her staring at a car behind us."

A tiny laugh came to my ears above the humming of the motors.

"Yes, Esmerelda watches over me," the contessa said assuredly. "I tell her everything. She is more than the ordinary duenna. She is, in fact, a distant cousin, and her admiration of my father and the family is without bounds."

I waited for more information, but, as nothing came, became intent on my driving. It seemed endless, as if the road were to stretch on forever; but always I was directed by the sleepless, quiet little figure by my side until in the early dawn we made a last sweep round the edge of the cliffs, with the sea slumbering far beneath, slid slowly downward, took another turn and saw

the belfry of a tiny town, a cove where boats lay at anchor.

The contessa lifted herself in her seat, and said: "The first turn to the left leads to La Reposa, our summer home."

We reached it. A sleepy old lodge keeper, aroused from his rest, made marvelous obeisance to the contessa and opened huge iron gates. A sleepy old housekeeper, grumbling but paternal, welcomed the contessa in the broad entry of a place that could be characterized as little less than a small palace. In a daze of weariness amounting to stupidity I was conducted to a room where I lost not a single movement in finding my bed.

I awoke with a guilty sense of having slept until the sun was well up. At the breakfast table, I learned they had not aroused me because Esmerelda had insisted that I be permitted to get sufficient sleep to be fit for our next work. I had not anticipated such solicitude and kindness from her, but when I attempted to thank her, she merely favored me with that same unsmiling exterior and said nothing. Inasmuch as they had accepted me as their leader, I outlined my plan, which was this:

Tilly and Monty were to go down to the boathouse and overhaul the engines of the boat therein, while the contessa and I were to take the car, drive to a point near the village where we had first met and then, on foot, try to retrace my steps on the night I had escaped from the cavern. If we could approximate the part of the coast wherein the cavern lay concealed, it would make our voyage by sea direct and easy.

I thought an afternoon would suffice for this and that on the following morning we could start our voyage. The contessa agreed with me, although Monty remarked that if the boat hadn't been well cared for it might take more than an afternoon to get the engines into first-class order. But we were dealing with uncertainties and—I am now glad that such was the case!

Before the contessa and I started on our trip, Esmerelda announced that inasmuch as she had a violent headache she would not accompany us. And—I didn't grieve!

WHAT a vast difference there is between walking on tired feet and being carried by wheels that can throw seventy-five miles behind them every hour! I had no idea of the distance that lay between Molarda, that dingy little summer resort, and that northern coast of Spain which I had gained after my adventure in the sea and the cavern thereby. But I should like to take that drive again as I took it on that summer's afternoon with the Contessa Amparra by my side.

She wasn't a contessa any longer—just a confiding and leaning friend. It was as if the reserve that she had held between herself and a hired chauffeur had all been torn away, as if she were riding beside a trusted friend to whom she could unburden many anxieties and hopes and fears, without restraint.

She was a new being, then! Something so admirable, so simple, so desirable, that there were moments when I felt like stopping the big, roaring car, taking my hands from the wheel and telling her so. I shall always think that for once in my life, that afternoon, I was inspired to wisdom in that I exercised such restraint. The miles slipped away. We left the great road with its sweeping curves and broad-flung views and turned into a farm track that held us closer to the border of the sea.

We clawed up the slopes of high hills and slithered down into the purpled ravines. We swung ourselves cautiously along narrow tracks, with the sea far beneath, watching us, and at last came out on a promontory where she bade me stop.

"Over there on the other side," she said, "is the village where—you first came to my aid. The place where you met the goathead is, I think, just over the hill."

I climbed out of the car and to the top of a little rocky eminence, from which I could look down over a fairly broad sweep. I saw, like a white silk ribbon, a stream somewhat below me. Following it upward with my eyes I discerned the place from which it issued, a little belt of forest that had escaped the woodcutter's ax. Beyond that again, I saw a road.

I was almost certain that in that timber was the pool where I had washed my soiled clothing and body, but I could see no way of reaching it with the big Hispano, so returned and told the contessa that I proposed to walk from there and that if she would await my return I would——

I got no farther, for she immediately climbed from the car and announced that she would like to accompany me. I could make no objections and so, taking my little cliff as a landmark, we struck off over the hills. We found the pool after a half hour's walk, and it and its rocks seemed as familiar to me as old friends.

"Now," I said, "if we cut down the hillside until we reach that country road, we can walk along it to the left, or uphill side, and I think I can identify the place where I crawled out—or at least approximately the place. Then from there we'll try to get a landmark that we can identify from the sea and call it an afternoon's work well done."

She seemed as pleased as a child at our success and complimented me on my bump of location as we started scrambling down the hillside. Here and there I offered her my hand down some rocky declivity, but her agility and surefootedness were those of one who has done much mountain rambling. Once, when I slipped, she laughingly suggested that perhaps it would be better if she assisted me.

I THINK we were in a happy and adventurous mood on reaching another clump of second-growth timber with rather a thick scrub that drove us to find goat paths for crossing its labyrinths, and now we saw through an opening the road which was our objective. Even as we saw it, we heard a rumbling, rattling, hollow sound made by some sort of motor vehicle struggling over its inequalities.

We stood where we were, for no reason on earth, save that we saw no sense in invading a dust cloud that would dissipate itself in a few minutes after the vehicle passed. The fact that we could not be seen from the road had no bearing on our movements, for we had no thought of any necessity for concealment. The roar and clatter increased and we could hear above it the raised voice of a man evidently cursing the roughness of the road.

An ugly, huge old lorry with closed sides trundled into view, and instinctively I caught the contessa's arm and drew her father behind a screen of brush. For there, roughly clad, was Marnier at the wheel, while by his side, equally rough in appearance, sat the chauffeur of Carson, the archconspirator of the whole gang, the man who had been my neighbor in room No. 12.

We stood there, watching that cloud of dust until it disappeared around a bend, without saying a word and then found ourselves staring at each other with perplexed eyes.

"Did you recognize those two men?" the contessa asked, in a peculiarly restrained voice as if suddenly feeling the need for caution, brought back, as it were, to the graver cause of our afternoon's excursion.

"Yes, I did," I replied. "And it seems so incredible that I'm fuddled with trying to think of any excuse for

their being here, dressed like Basque farm hands, and driving a lorry. But there's not a doubt in my mind that their visit here has something to do with all that stuff I saw hidden in the caves. What do you make of it?"

She shook her head and stared in the direction the lorry had taken, as if trying to bring back from its passage an answer to the puzzle.

"It was a Spanish lorry," I remarked, "because I saw the number swinging behind—G. S. 0005."

"That is a number issued in this province," the contessa said. "But where do you suppose it came from and —where does it go?"

"Both of which questions I wish I could accurately guess the answers for," I muttered.

"Of course, if we could get our car down here we could follow them," she said thoughtfully.

"But," I objected, "could we learn anything of value thereby? And shouldn't we run the risk of being seen by them and set them to wondering what we also are doing down here in such an out-of-the-way corner of Spain? Is the risk of being seen by them worth anything we might learn?"

"I can't answer your questions," she said, making a tiny little moue at me. "But it seems to me that we shouldn't do anything too precipitate."

"And in the meantime, they get away," I said, "and it's getting well along toward sunset."

She nodded that shapely head of hers, but seemed to lack her customary air of decision and, getting no help from her, I began weighing in my mind, as rapidly as possible, lest I waste time for pursuit, the possible advantage and mishaps. The balance didn't swing to suit me. Whatever Marnier and his friend had done was done. Whatever they were intent on doing, we couldn't stop.

They couldn't have been adding to that store of ammunition and arms and, without considerable assistance, they couldn't have been carting it away. No, the latter was impossible, for their lorry couldn't have handled such a weight. Moreover, I couldn't see either of them as silly fools who would have battered along rough roads with a ton or so of high explosives at the rate they were traveling. I wouldn't have risked it, and the war had probably taught them caution, as it had me, if they had seen the vicissitudes of service, as I surmised at least one of them had.

NO, it appeared best, from all the possible angles, to adhere to our original intent of seeking that store of illicit arms and destroying it. If by any cleverness Marnier and his pal, at the behest of their superiors, had augmented the store by land smuggling, so much the better. So much greater the blow to their enterprise. And—as always—we couldn't call in a coast guard or any other constituted authority to assist us. We must make the search and confiscation unaided. So I laid all these reasonings before my companion and she, listening attentively, now and then disputing, finally agreed to follow them.

"I feel that I must leave it to your judgment," she said. "I'm only a woman and—and I'm tired after all the months of worry I've endured and it seems nice to have some one on whom I can lean when I'm in doubt. You do just what you think is best. If things go wrong, my very good friend, it will not be your fault, nor shall I ever blame you."

Solemnly and in a far different mood than when we came down, we climbed the hill again, quite like Napoleon who had "an army of a hundred thousand men, and marched them down the hill, my boys, then marched them up again," with no decisive result. Most of the way we moved unconversationally, each

absorbed in thought. That surprise had been too disturbing.

Throughout the return to La Reposa we thrashed this matter over for a solution, but had none when we arrived. Nor could Tilly nor Monty offer a suggestion. They declared that the motor boat *Matador* was in perfect condition, requiring nothing more than a cleaning and new batteries which, fortunately, they had been able to purchase in the village. Her generators would do the rest.

A drum of petrol had been found in the boathouse, so that everything was in readiness for the cruise. Inasmuch as we proposed to start at three o'clock in the morning, having such a long run ahead of us, we retired immediately after dinner. All of us were sufficiently tired to sleep and, when we were aroused, I felt that I could have enjoyed a few more hours.

When we arose we scanned the sky and the sea. They were working together beneficently, the former clear with waning stars, the latter as smooth as if in deep sleep. The duenna, still suffering, did not accompany us when, laden with hampers, we descended to the boathouse. We were hailed by a watchful guarda del costa, on the watch, perhaps, for smugglers, who became obsequious when he recognized the contessa and was told that we were off for a day's fishing and exploration.

In a few minutes we had the big sliding door drawn up. Monty, clad in an old jumper, fussed a moment with his engines and the *Matador* swam out to sea buoyantly, gracefully, as if happy to travel after long imprisonment. When clear of the land, she took on a steady fifteen knots and lifted her nose higher as if to get a view of what lay ahead, her engines singing that tune of delight which is so much more enjoyable than the humming drone of a motor car.

Ten o'clock came and we had luncheon from the hampers and thermos flasks, the contessa insisting on our making a landing to do so. And she was the perfect hostess. Indeed she seemed to forget some of those perturbations that had so heavily weighed upon her and was temporarily happy.

WHEN we took to the boat again, an hour had gone. Presently both the contessa and I began to stare at the headlands, hoping to identify the landmarks we had chosen; but a profile of land seen from the sea presents an entirely different aspect from one ashore, as we began to learn.

The rugged promontories seemed to have dwindled and melted into one another. The whole shore line was an unbroken, never-ending cliff, dipping directly into the water. Once we thought we had reached the spot and cautiously edged in close to the footwall of the great gray giants and examined it, yard by yard, until compelled to sheer off again to avoid reefs.

Again we tried, again were disappointed. Even Tilly, who was more or less irrepressible, stopped his bantering and kept his binoculars fixed on the shore line. We probed in and out, ran sometimes farther offshore to try to recognize our landmarks and finally discussed landing if we could find any place offering such possibility.

Time wore on, until it became a certainty that we could delay our homeward start but little longer. We were actually making our last shore cast at the foot of formidable cliffs, resolved if this proved a failure to head for the boathouse, when we found it. The cavern entrance was so concealed by nature that it was practically invisible at a distance of a cable's length.

"No wonder you nearly drowned before you entered it," the contessa remarked, regarding me with sympathetic eyes.

"And no wonder it was chosen for a

hiding place," Monty added, as he swung the wheel and brought the bow of the boat gently up on the sloping sand inside the cavern's narrow, gloomy mouth.

"See here," I said, as the thought came to me, "hadn't we better go inside rather cautiously? Suppose they have some one there guarding that stuff? Whoever is there wouldn't hesitate to shoot."

Tilly promptly volunteered himself as a scout, but, being nearest the bow of the boat and also more familiar with the cavern—a recollection which made me shudder!—I jumped out and went ahead, after warning the others to silence.

I came to the place where I knew there was a turn previous to the widening of the cave and crept round it, lest my figure be silhouetted against the light to any watcher within. I lay there on the sand in the inner darkness, listening for any sound and, with my eyes accustoming themselves to the gloom, staring here and there into the depths to see if I could observe any one moving. All was silent and all motionless. I stood up and, holding the heavy electric torch in my hand, well out to one side so as to offer a false target, invited a shot or a shout. Neither came.

"Any one in there?" I called, in Spanish, heard the echoes go beating around the great hollows and projections, but provoked no reply.

I called again and, getting no response, walked ahead, turning the light this way and that, probing the blackness. I was still thus engaged when a light shot out from behind me, then another and finally a third. Unable to restrain themselves, the others had followed me and for a moment I was frightfully apprehensive lest they might meet with an unwelcome reception.

The silence continued, however. Now, somewhat reassured, we advanced up into the depths until we reached the black spot where I had seen the first great bonfire. To the second black spot was but a short distance and, holding my light upward, I saw the ladder, reaching to the upper cave's entrance, still in position.

I couldn't understand the meaning of that. It seemed peculiarly reckless in the smugglers to leave it resting there, after the arms had been hidden. There was nothing for it but to climb up and observe. I did so and reached the top, where a narrow cleft led inward. I walked along this some twenty paces and then came to the greatest disappointment of all.

The inner cavern was small and—completely empty! That it had been the hiding place was proved by a dozen or so new rifle cartridges that lay on the floor, as if in the removal a case had burst open and, in picking up its contents, these had been overlooked. Examining still more closely, I found prints in the sand where the rifle butts had been stacked against the wall and the imprints of smaller cases, presumably those containing the bombs. Some one undoubtedly had got ahead of us and removed the entire store. Our hopes of confiscation and destruction were ended.

THE others came in and saw what I pointed out. Then we stood there silently reasoning how and by whom this could have been done. It was Monty who said:

"The stuff wasn't taken by the coast guards, because then there would have been a watch set to catch the men for whom the rifles were intended. They must have been removed by the revolutionists."

Understanding came to me on that instant.

"That," I said, to the contessa, who, depressed and worried, stood beside me, "explains that lorry and its drivers we saw yesterday. They drove here by

appointment. The revolutionists inside had prepared everything for the quick transportation of the whole lot to some more convenient place for distribution."

"If that is so, the time for the revolt is soon," she said. "Perhaps at once! Perhaps this very night; for they would never issue the arms and ammunition until the very last moment, lest some *guarda* or inquisitive person discover that there were new army rifles in this part of the mountains!"

"I'm afraid we are too late," was all I could say.

Tilly, for once very serious, said quietly: "We are. You can bet on that!"

"I'm not so certain that it isn't the *guarda* after all," Monty reasoned. "If they grabbed the lot, they must have learned of that upper passage somehow, and there is where they would set a guard to catch the revolutionaries—not down here. But—that of course wouldn't explain the business of that lorry."

I felt the contessa's hand on my arm and heard her say, almost wearily, as if with hopeless resignation: "Well, you have all done your best and there is nothing more we can do here. It grows late. Let us go. And for what you tried to do, my friends, I can never, never sufficiently thank you."

So, in dejection, with the contessa in the lead, we started for the boat. We waited for her to descend the light ladder leading down to the floor of the main cavern, I on my knees steadying its top as she passed downward into the darkness. I felt the movement of the ladder cease and called to her:

"Safely down?"

She did not respond and again I shouted. Then, alarmed lest she had suffered mishap, I straightened up and called for a torch. Monty thrust his into my hand, the space being so narrow that he could not come to my side, and I threw the ray of light downward. She was not at the foot of the ladder. I lifted the torch and threw its rays farther outward. It seemed to me that I caught the mere flitting of shadows hastening around the jut of the cavern wall, and I exclaimed: "Something's wrong! Come on!" and fairly fell down the flimsy ladder and ran, stumbling in my haste, toward the point where I thought I had discerned movement.

I had but gained it when the cavern seemed filled with sharp staccato beats, roars and echoes. Monty and I in the lead, and Tilly puffing behind, gained the entrance to the cavern and saw, already under way and with her bow throwing up a wave, the *Matador*, going at full racing speed, with a man with a bandaged wrist at the engines and, in the rear, struggling in the hands of her duenna, Esmerelda, the Contessa Amparra!

In tow behind was a small seaside launch that bobbed wildly and explained how the duenna and her accomplice had reached the cavern. We stood there helpless, I with my magazine pistol in my hand and afraid to shoot lest I get the wrong target, while the boat passed quickly from view.

CHAPTER IX.

A VOICE FROM THE DISTANCE.

"THAT old she-devil has done us!" Tilly exclaimed, then, as the ease of the "doing" dawned upon him from a humorous side, he laughed.

Neither Monty nor I were in a laughing mood, however. For me, in particular, the situation was alarming. That we had been so easily betrayed by that woman of masculine strength and conquistador spirit seemed little less than ignominy. I was convinced that no bodily injury would be inflicted on the contessa, but—I hadn't provided for betrayal from that quarter and was therefore deficient. A poor conspira-

tor! An inadequate friend! My meditations, confined in that time of chagrin to mere seconds, were interrupted by Tilly, who said:

"Hello! What's that stuff over there?"

We looked at him and he started toward a side of the cavern but a few yards distant where, beyond tidal marks, lay a pile of dunnage. We found that it consisted of food and blankets and, pinned on top of the latter, an envelope addressed to Monty with full titular dignity, which read:

It is through consideration for your blood and class only that this provision is made, and not through any concern regarding the two Americans who are with you. You and your companions have foolishly interfered in something that is of too much importance to be obstructed by the efforts of individuals. You should have considered this before participating with efforts that are, at the best, misdirected.

The dignity and welfare of Spain, and our family, have driven me to action that I would preferably have avoided; by my Cousin Amparra shall not in any wise be permitted to make a fool of herself and obstruct those whom, save for a misguided zeal, she should support. I have therefore provided you with sufficient for the few days which will intervene before any efforts you may make will be useless, and, *un grand fait acompli,* I shall then send a launch for your liberation.

With many regrets at this necessity, I am, yours most respectfully, and with salutations,

ESMERELDA DE PEREZ Y RIOS.

Monty read this almost fanatical message aloud, translating it into English for Tilly's benefit. Personally I had visions of that hard, firm face bent above a paper, plotting and writing. It was now too plainly evident that she was herself one of the conspirators planted, or suborned to the cause of those who supported Carson.

Probably, thought I, she was induced to act through ambitions to see the contessa's father, her kinsman and head of her distinguished family, become what she deemed the savior of Spain. This thing of patriotism alone is sufficiently dangerous and seductive to befool us all, but when coupled with family pride, poverty and ambition becomes doubly dangerous. She had plotted successfully—how far I could not surmise—but at least well enough to forewarn the heads of conspiracy and offset any of our comparatively childish efforts at obstruction.

I had lost sight of Amardo, but evidently he had been kept in touch from the moment I took his passport, livery and position and had been sufficiently—too much so—capable of handling the engines of a launch. With his capable assistance, she had outwitted us and we were, I feared, helplessly marooned. There was still the vague hope that she was unaware that there was a way of escape from the sea-bound trap. It seemed our sole hope for further action.

WE decided that we would, first of all, gather the few pieces of driftwood and few remnants of packing cases to make a fire in the cavern while we had daylight to assist us. This preparation for a night's camp comfort was accomplished before the sun sent its last friendly rays from the west and left us in the gloom.

I then took the torches, now carefully husbanded, and with Monty as my escort essayed the long shelf and fearsome slopes that had once before enabled me to escape. Tilly, somewhat grave but untroubled, and lamenting his physical inhibitions, remained below to keep the fire alight and prepare a supper.

The climb seemed less arduous to me, better fed, less desperate and more confident than on that night when, battered and starved, I had followed its upward and perilous course to freedom. Perhaps, also, my incentive was greater; but climb we did with persistent hope, upward and upward until the camp fire became a spark in great depths beneath

and the ledge of rock had narrowed to the edge of the natural break.

Then the hope of escape that way departed. Fifteen feet beyond us hung suspended there in the torchlight the planks that formed that sole bridge. We were cut off as immeasurably as by a whole mountain chasm from that solitary method of release. Those who had last preceded us had not neglected to make certain of the only bridge. Disheartened, Monty and I made our way back down the long ledge to convey our news to Tilly and, over the supper, plain but ample, we somewhat uselessly discussed our predicament.

Our search for the cavern had proved the impossibility for any of us to swim far enough, under the most favorable sea conditions, to gain a landing and, even with material to build a crude raft, the attempt would have hazardous. We could but hope to attract the attention of some passing fisherman and, with this in mind, we finally went to sleep.

We put in the following forenoon at the mouth of the cavern, but saw no boat. We resumed our watch in the afternoon, with no better result, save that we saw off on the horizon what we took to be a Spanish gunboat and questioned the advisability of firing our pistols in unison in the hope of attracting her attention, but concluded that we dare not risk rescue from such source.

THE dragging, impotent hours added to our sense of futility, until we fell to silence, each brooding in his own way. The sea appeared to partake of our mood and was so quiet there in front of the cavern that it was soundless, motionless, very still. Then all our lethargy was broken by a faint whistle that came echoing through the spaces of the cavern at our backs.

Instantly we were on our feet and staring at one another. Then we turned and ran quietly back into the depths of the cavern and, in the darkness, stood close together, intent, listening. Again we heard that shrill whistle far above, as if it came from the vault of that immense natural recess. Its echoes swept grotesquely about us, bounding from one space to another, from one projection to another, until lost in silence.

"Smugglers?" Monty whispered.

"Hanged if I know," Tilly replied, in a similar guarded way. "What do you think, Johnny?"

"If so, we're no better off," was all I could answer. "Maybe if we could grope our way farther up toward the end of this cavern, we could hear voices and decide."

Holding hands lest we lose one another and not daring to flash a torch to descry our footing, we stumbled along for a hundred yards or more. Indeed we were still thus stumbling ahead when a new sound reached us. It was the sound of a shepherd's pipes playing an absurdly melancholy, minor tune.

It came back to me like a welcome. It could have been executed by none other than my little goatherd, whose music had proved beneficent on that morning of my most intense misery and desolation. Instantly I cupped my hands and shouted upward a response.

"Is it you, amigo?" came a boyish voice.

I shouted: *"Si, si!* Where are you?"

We strained our ears to catch the reply.

"Up here on the shelf which you know. Bring lights and come upward to the edge of the break."

We flashed our torches now as we returned to the mouth of the cavern, found the ledge and Monty and I raced forward until a plaintive protest from Tilly slowed us down.

"Hey! You fellows! Have a little mercy on a fat man who hasn't been over this damnably narrow, steep path

before. I'm scared stiff, even when I travel slowly. And some of these places don't look any too wide. I'm not a builder of skyscrapers, or a goat!"

WE helped him forward and sometimes he required much encouragement, for all of which I didn't blame him. I remembered my first trip over that perilous route and fully understood his terrors. When at last we reached the edge of the unbridged chasm and flashed our lights across its terrifying space, we discovered our little goatherd at the very edge, with nothing better than a stump of a tallow dip in his hand, while behind him stood a figure that was unrecognizable but appeared to be another goatherd, who had come with my little friend and benefactor. The latter wasted no time and seemed to be the leader.

"We have brought a rope, señor," he said, "which you will please catch. We can possibly pull the bridge up on its pulley, but are not of strength to upend it and let it fall across, as is the custom of those who use it. So, if you will catch the line, we will, when the planks are raised, fasten an end thereto and you can pull it across to its place. And then—with the help and blessings of the saints!—you may come across."

While Monty and Tilly held their lights, I stood and waited. A coil of thin rope whistled through the air. I caught it, and heard from the opposite side:

"Well done, señor! Well done! We will now get this bridge up—if we can."

We stood there with our lights turned upon them and watched their struggles. Once or twice it seemed beyond their strength, but they persisted and fought until, inch by inch, we saw the bound planks laboriously ascend, gain the level and then slowly drag forward until they rested on the ledge. My little goatherd bent over on his knees and knotted his end of the line about an end of a plank and then, straightening up, waved an arm across at us and shouted:

"Now, señores! But pull carefully lest the line break; for it is all I could find."

And it is certain that we exercised full care, for we succeeded finally in getting that plank across and securely fixed to our edge of the void.

"All right here at this end," the goatherd declared, after making an adjustment or two.

Being in the lead, I dropped to hands and knees and made the venture. Either because familiarity breeds contempt, or because I was so eager to escape, I found the passage far less trying than on my first experience and got easily across. The lights from the other side were in my face when I stood up and called to Monty:

"Perhaps you had best tie that line about your body. It will help to steady you and I can pull and maybe assist you from this side."

"No, I have the head of a mountaineer," he called back. "I'll leave it for Tilly. He, maybe, would like it."

"You can be sure of that! I wish it was a derrick," came a rumbled response.

Then, in a few minutes more, Monty was by my side and we were holding a torch to light the plank when Tilly, with labors and terrors which I fully understood and with which I sympathized, groaned and groped his way slowly across.

"My God!" he declared as he gained our side. "If ever any one deserved a medal, I do. Bravest thing I ever did in my life! Wouldn't do it again to save Spain from being sunk in the Mediterranean."

"If one of the señores will lend me one of his marvelous lights, I will lead the way out," the goatherd said. "We can then talk in the open air."

THUS admonished by this little general, I handed him my torch, showed how to use it and with his companion ahead of him we went forward, leaving the planks to remain there forever, as far as we were concerned. Crouching or crawling, bumping the sides and finally creeping through the tunnel that Tilly swore he could never squeeze through if it narrowed a single inch more, we at last came, one by one, through the trapdoor of turf and stood in broad daylight, begrimed, spent, but elated.

Then for the first time I recognized that unknown goatherd. It was the Contessa Amparra, blushing somewhat through the dirt on her face because of her ragged, boyish attire.

"Heavens!" I exclaimed, in astonishment. "You, contessa?"

"Yes, it is I, or what is left of me," she replied, regarding her bruised hands. "Surely you didn't think I would leave you, my friends, there in a hole like that?"

"But—but—how did you do it?" we chorused, grouping ourselves around where, as if completely worn out, she had seated herself on a boulder.

"When I left you three in that little recess in the cavern," she said, "Esmerelda, whom I can never forgive and who can never again be a friend of mine—I swear it!—and that unspeakable beast Amardo threw a shawl about my head and he picked me up and carried me to the *Matador*. It seems that she had known all the time of our plans and that he had been kept down here at the village of San Doro for emergency. When I saw there was no further use in struggling, I gave up and pretended to have surrendered.

"They ran the *Matador,* towing the launch in which they followed us, back to the boathouse of La Reposa. Then when I got a chance I locked Esmerelda in her room. I was talking to her through the door when Amardo came running into the hallway and threatened me. I told him to leave me alone, but he called me a vixen and charged at me with his hands out to seize me. I didn't wait any longer. I shot him and he fell on the floor. I don't think I killed him. I hope not. But he was still groaning when I dragged him into another room and locked him in there.

"Then I ordered the gatekeeper to go to the little village garage and get a man who could drive my car. While he was gone, I sat there in the hallway with the revolver in my hand, guarding the two doors. I'd—I'm afraid I'd have shot Esmerelda, too, if she had succeeded in breaking that door down. Anyway, I told her so and, when that didn't stop her, I fired a shot through the panel, taking care to point the pistol upward so as not to hurt her. That frightened her into quietude.

"When the man came from the village garage," she went on, "I told him to get the car out and, when all was ready, told Esmerelda that I was going, but that she had better let her dear friend out and find how badly he was hurt after I left. Then I went downstairs and smashed the telephone to pieces with a stone vase, gave the keys to Esmerelda's and Amardo's rooms to the housekeeper and we drove as fast as I could get that man to go to the little village over there.

"You see, Mr. Ives, I remembered all you had told me about that little goatherd and I was certain that, if I could find him, he would know the smuggler's way into the caves. I found him with the assistance of some villagers, sent them all away and told him I wanted his help. And—that is all. He borrowed these rags from somewhere, that line, his candle and we came on. Oh, he is a little prince, and ——" She turned and seized the boy in her arms and, much to his embarrassment, gave him a kiss. "It is, after all, he who rescued you."

"And, of course, you had to take him into your confidence regarding the arms," Monty blurted in Spanish, forgetting for the moment, doubtless, that his speech would be understood by the goatherd, who now stood there staring from one to another of us with an unbounded curiosity and respect on his sun-tanned and begrimed face.

His voice and that of the contessa's came together.

"No," she said, "I told him nothing save that you were there and I wished to get you out."

"Arms?" the goatherd repeated. "Arms, señor? You mean rifles and—cartridges—and other things of which I know not?"

We all regarded him in astonishment, for his attitude was eager, pent. And we listened while he continued:

"If it is of those you would know, I can tell you. But—señores, if I did so, it—it—— I might be killed by those who have taken them away, for they are gone!"

CHAPTER X.

THE REVOLUTIONISTS' PLANS.

THERE are times when unexpected information of the utmost importance seems to come with such a shock as to render men temporarily speechless. We three men stood there, open-mouthed and staring at the boy, who looked from one another of us as if frightened by our attitudes.

It was the contessa whose wits were the first to work. She reached over and drew the goatherd down beside her, put an arm across his shoulder and said to us: "You frighten him." Then reassuringly to the goatherd, to whom she was still "The Great Lady of Viscaya," she addressed herself.

"Now, my little friend, tell us all you know of the arms. Tell it in your own way and be not afraid. We shall not betray you. We give you our words of honor."

Even then he hesitated, as if under the spell of a great fear, and looked about nervously as if afraid that we might be overheard. I could not but admire the contessa's patience as he began his rambling, boyish recountal, for I, better than the others, knew the strain under which she labored and her desire for brevity that might make room for action. But she encouraged him to tell it in his own way and checked us with a frown if we threatened to interrupt.

"Two days ago," said the goatherd, "some men hired the lorry of the Señor Alfio and, it being my turn for the night herding, I was in the village and saw them drive away. You understand, contessa, that there are two of us goatherds—one who takes the day flock for a week while the other takes the night flock. We take it in turns. It was the last of my night turn.

"On the next day I wondered why those strange men wanted the lorry of the Señor Alfio and I saw its tracks. They led to the Smugglers' Hole. *Ahora,* it was there I saw the lorry had made three trips and, as it is as well to herd one's goats in one direction as another on these, our hills, I learned that the lorry had been driven to the abandoned house which the señor knows, for it was there we met.

"And I, who know it well through having sheltered therein on many days or nights when the rain fell and the wind blew, saw tracks in the dust of the floor that led to an inner room, that which is no pleasant chamber because it was there that Paule Rontaro, many, many years ago, in madness slew his wife and child and her mother."

Juan stopped speaking, crossed himself devoutly and murmured: "*Con Dios las almas de ellas!*"—"With God are their souls!"

The contessa reverently bent her head and crossed herself in recognition of this interpolated prayer for the dead.

I looked at Monty, and his hand had just come to rest, while Tilly, who understood little Spanish, stared at me in amazement, threatened speech and was restrained by a gesture of my hand. He grinned and shook his head and again fell to watching the expressions on our faces as the goatherd resumed in his regular, worldly voice.

"There is a concealed cavern under that room that they say was once used by smugglers in the days when smuggling rum and tobacco was a good business. A very good and paying business—before I was born, perhaps before the contessa was born. I am afraid of that room, as are many others; but I went into it and through the fireplace into the cellar and—there were many strange boxes and many, many—very many—rifles such as soldiers shoot with. And I wondered for whom they were smuggled and why.

"Had I wanted a rifle, I would have taken one. But to own such a rifle might make the *guarda* dislike one, and —I thought if no one came soon, perhaps those strange men of the lorry would not miss one rifle out of so many and perhaps I had better take one and hide it until I could grow up. I thought of this after I had come back out to watch my flock, because if that bell goat of mine were to wander into one of the cultivated fields of the Farmer Alcantro, there would be many hard words and they might hire another goatherd.

"*Gracia a Dios!* I was just in time. The villain who always tries to slip away if I sleep, having the cunning of the devil under his bony horns, was just inviting all the flock into the fields of the Señor Alcantro. Hence I was none too soon. But last night I could not but think of what one rifle is worth, and that one from so many would never be missed, and the more I thought, the more it seemed proper that I should thus go and get one lest some plague-cursed thief come and seize the lot before I get mine!"

The involuntary smile of the contessa distracted him for an instant and he stared at her with his big, brown, innocent eyes, as if wondering why she was amused. Then he returned to his narrative in his peculiarly old-young way, the way of an uncultivated but good brain given to much meditation through long, lonely days and nights in the mountains.

"The night had but stars. Yet to one who is a goatherd, as I, the paths are known. And I found, contessa, some men sitting there in front of the house. They smoked. They talked. And I, disappointed, was curious to know of what these men talked and so crept closer until I could hear what they said. There is a thicket of axalias there and in those I hid. Other men came—now one, now two, sometimes four or five.

"And then came one who had a list and called their names. For him they had much respect. I know him not. He stood them up in line and called their names and each answered. Then some of them went to that smugglers' cellar and the rifles and boxes were brought forth and a rifle and other things given to each man. They were doing this when there came one Marti Solaro, who sometimes drinks well and walks by night; but—a friend of mine, contessa, a friend!

"And upon him they fell and he, having drunk too well, roared like a monster and fought until they threw him down. He was badly beaten. He must have been much beaten, for it made him sober and—I have never known him sober, save after a sleep. They then talked. The leader was for killing him. So were some others.

"I found a rock with which to fight and help him and was just going to go out and hit that leader man, when some one said: 'Here! I know that man.

He is harmless. Why not let him live if he joins us? He cares not with whom he fights and—I like not this murder, if we can avoid it.' Others said: 'That is so. Give the man his choice.' And poor Marti, my friend, all covered with blood, saved his life by agreeing to join them. For that beating I could have killed them all! By the wrath of Heaven I could!"

His indignation was such that his soiled, sun-tanned little fists were clenched and he shook them above him, as if for the moment forgetting that we were there. Then, abruptly conscious of our presence, he flushed, looked as if begging pardon and went on. But we knew the cause of his indignation and one of the reasons why he was ready to take us into his confidence.

"This leader—may he never pass purgatory!—then got all these men who now had rifles—one of which should have by rights been mine!—around him and talked some more so they could understand. So did I, still lying there like a beetle in the grass at the foot of the axalias. It seems, contessa, that to-night is to be a very important night for our land of Spain."

Our exclamations, coming in impulsive chorus, interrupted him.

"To-night, I said," he repeated, and then after a moment: "Why, señores?"

I looked with pitying eyes at the Contessa Amparra. Her slender white hands had come together in front of her and were clutched so tightly as to appear bloodless. Her face had paled. Her lips were shut as if to suppress a moan of pain and despair.

Her eyes were opened wide and staring at nothing, as if mentally she pictured strife, bloodshed, perhaps ruin. I had an insane wish to reach over and pick her up into my arms and soothe her as well as words might and to make her feel that there was some one left in the world who would make her sorrows his own. Damn it! I couldn't bear to have her hurt!

Tilly, to whom I had now and then whispered an interpretation, was repeating a growled, "H'mph! H'mph! H'mph!" and fidgeting heavily on his feet. But it was Monty's voice, quiet, restrained, sorrowful, that calmed our agitation with:

"Hadn't we better let this boy tell the rest of it? If we're too late—we're too late, and that's all there is to it. But if there's a chance left, we should learn how to take advantage of it."

All of us seemed to take a fresh hold of ourselves, and it was the contessa who patted the goatherd's shoulder and said:

"We are sorry to have stopped you. Please tell us what there is left to tell. We shall all be quiet."

The boy, still looking puzzled, muttered: "I but tell the truth. And—*si, si!* I said that these men thought to-night important."

He lifted both his hands and made a gesture, let them fall back to a resting position and went on:

"There are to be many battles to overthrow some man named Rivero, who is of great importance to our king, 'Alfonso the Kindly.' At dawn of to-morrow, men here and there, I know not the places—for I have never traveled beyond these mountains and names are but hearsay—but at several places men such as I saw are to seize forts and towns where there are cannon. It is expected that many soldiers will immediately join them and become no longer soldiers for this great man Rivero, but soldiers for a new man who is to take his place and power.

"It is not expected that there will be many men killed. The leader of those who got rifles talked to them—explained that as soon as the soldiers heard what had happened up on the line where Spain joins France, they would not care to fight, but would lay

down their rifles and wait for the new man to tell them what to do.

"This first and big movement, contessa, is to be made at a place which he called Vera. There, at two o'clock to-morrow morning, a great army of men with wonderful guns and rifles—a very great many!—are to come from the French side and, contessa, is it true that your illustrious father, the great man of our province, El Conde de los Rios y Ruiz, is to lead them?

"That is what this one, leader or liar, said. He said that at two o'clock to-night your father would bring this army into Spain and that by to-morrow's sunrise all the important points where soldiers are would be ready to welcome him. And, contessa, where is this place Vera? Is it such a place as Madrid? I have known nothing but these hills, the hills of Viscaya, the land that is yours and mine—and I would know."

"Vera is the first town when one leaves France in the province of Navarra," said Monty. "On the River Bidasea. A small town, deep down in the hollows of mountains. But don't bother about that. Tell us what these men did and their plans."

"Vera is to be the first place taken," the boy said. "I am certain that is the town, because this leader explained that there at Vera are but few soldiers and that from there are many routes leading into Spain. When all the other soldiers know that an army is already in Spain and have made what they call a base—I know not what they meant by that, but that is what he said several times—a base—the rest will be easy.

"That is nearly all I know, for soon thereafter they went hurriedly, in groups—sometimes one or two men, sometimes five or six. They are to meet to-night, but I know not where. It is some distance from here, I think, and they are to take some city, which one I know not. But it is this place—Vera—where the great army is to show all Spain and the world that a new government is doing things. That is the name, Vera, which the señor says is in Navarra, of which I seem to have heard. And these men took poor Marti with them, and—I wish I could have fought them and helped him!"

He stopped, listened, seemed aware of something amiss and exclaimed: *Aya!* I have forgotten my flock! Now that you are safe, señores, I must return. You know the way."

He jumped to his feet and would have fled had not I caught him.

"My little friend," I cautioned him, "tell no one what you have told us. We shall come again and—prove our friendship. But you must tell no one! It might be unsafe for you. You will not, will you?"

Hastily he crossed himself and uttered an oath that in English would have been appalling and then, with a leap and a wave of his hand, was gone.

The contessa sat like a statue of despair. Tilly was kicking a pebble to and fro with his feet and soberly regarding it, as if this mechanical action involved a great problem. Monty scowled at nothing, saw nothing, his mind absorbed in consideration. And I was mentally trying to find a loophole—any way to assist the girl who had trusted me and whom I wished to shield from possible grief.

IF we could reach that distant boundary line and then encounter her father, perhaps it was not yet too late to stop the movement! No, that wouldn't do. The affair had gone too far. But couldn't we keep him from making a fool of himself by personal participation? Perhaps we could, if necessary, kidnap him. Seize him. Throw him into the car and make off with him.

I found myself saying all this aloud and heard the contessa say:

"It's only by force that you could stop him. He would go on with it now, because he would feel that his honor was involved. He would go, though it cost him his life. It's the way he sees things. And if we proved to him that nothing but failure can come, he would go just the same—indeed, be more certain to go."

"But—pardon me—we don't know that it will fail!" Tilly objected. "And if it doesn't, your father will be a big man—for a moment at least."

She looked at him with something like impatience in her eyes, but was spared argument by Monty, who remarked dryly:

"It can't succeed. What they don't realize is that Alfonso is beloved and Rivero strong. They've come into contact with none but those who have a selfish outlook, men who assured them that there is ripe dissatisfaction in Spain when, as a matter of truth, there is nothing of the kind.

"Spain is content with existing conditions," he went on, "and is certain to be opposed to change, or lukewarm for any sort of revolt. Any uprising is certain to fail. And those who instigate it are—lost! We are for contessa. We are her men. And our last chance is to get hold of her father, a foolish man who has been drawn into something—well—out of his line—and keep him from making the final blunder."

Monty was so emphatic, so logical, so cold in his summary, that we were compelled to listen to his talk. We found ourselves nodding agreement, and the contessa finished any hesitancy we had by her assertion:

"That is true! All true! But what can we do?"

"We can go back to the car, send your temporary driver home in a cart and reach the French side of the border somewhere near San Jean de Luz before two o'clock by hard driving. Hard driving, I said!" Monty emphasized, as he turned his eyes upon me. "Very hard driving! And then—well—we must do the best we can. It's all I can think of. Once at San Jean de Luz, I know all the roads to Vera. Used to fish those streams and know every foot of the hills—even the smugglers' paths. If we could reach them in time and tell some story—anything, it doesn't matter—it will help. Any interruption or any delay is in our favor.

"But how about these other uprisings?" I cried. "The one here, for instance? We can't stop that. We don't know where it's to begin, not what its objective."

"Naturally we can't look after all of them," he retorted; "but we can try to check one of them. And the one we're going to try to block is the one upon which the others most depend. It's possible that not one of these will move until they learn what has happened at Vera. If that fails, they scatter, bury their arms, go back to their plows, wait for the next plan."

That contingency hadn't entered into my consideration. It seemed the most probable. I saw that both the contessa and Tilly were likewise interested and reflecting over this likelihood.

"I believe you are right, Monty," the contessa declared. "It seems to me that the plan you propose is the only one. But can we reach San Jean de Luz in time?"

"We can, with such a man as Johnny at the wheel," Monty said. "Tilly and I know our friend, contessa, and—he'll do all that any man can do. If we don't get there, it will not be his fault."

They all looked at me and all I could think of at the moment was that we must try. My mind rushed across the long roads and the scattered distances and I thought we could make it—if the car held together.

"Come on then," I said. "We waste time, and it's that we're up against!"

The contessa looked at me with a great and gratifying warmth as she sprang to her feet. We trudged over the hill to regain the village and the car. Within a few minutes the contessa had resumed her proper garb, we had made our preparations, found that we all had passports and were off on our chase.

CHAPTER XI.

RACING AGAINST TIME.

THERE were but few words of conversation, as I remember, on that drive. Monty, the Marquis de Montori, that Spanish rapier, lean, dark, quiet, intent, sat beside me, his sharply cut face set, his dark eyes brooding now upon the road, now seeing the possibilities of civil war that threatened a government to which he was loyal. It is probable that, of the four of us in the car, he and the contessa were the most appalled by the possibilities.

Personally I was driving a car at reckless speed, racing speed, with but one object—to save from sorrow the girl whom I had known for such a short time and whose happiness meant more to me than the fall of thrones or the collapse of dictators. Her father, that man who had so long loomed big in the background, meant nothing to me beyond the fact that he was her father and that, if we failed to save him from his folly, the tragedy would fall upon her. I drove as never before and hope never to drive again.

Taking every ounce of pull out of that reeling, rocking mechanism as it climbed hills and throwing it downward over long stretches until at times it seemed to have cleared the ground and taken off into the air intent upon flying, I had a score of narrow escapes. Once four lethargic oxen, pulling a great load of stone, came stolidly lumbering out of a right-angled farm road and we missed the leaders by such a narrow margin that I could feel their hot breathings as they drew back, affrighted, with the yoke held high and its fancy red tassels blowing in the wind.

Once I took the wheel off a road cart, driven by a plodding old man, and never slackened pace when I looked back and saw the unfortunate shaking his fist at us from the wreckage. We reared on two wheels around the curves of the great Spanish road, tore blindly through mountain tunnels, swerved close to the edges of cliffs, where the slightest accident would have ended our troubles in the sea below, and reached San Sabastin, spread out in summer magnificence on the borders of the lazy sea.

"We've done it in forty minutes less than the Tour de Spain record," Monty said, looking at his watch as I slowed down to keep from being arrested. "And you—old man—are you tired?"

I lifted my head long enough to glance at him and felt braced up for the next effort by that look of fond solicitude in his eyes. The same look I had smiled at in the days when he thought I was a hero, because I was born with muscles rather than brains! This peculiar and extraordinary thing of boyish hero worship—what heroes boys choose!

"Still good, 'Little Monty,'" I said, and saw warmth creep over him at the repetition of that pet name I had used in the older days, when the things contested were of less tragic importance. Terms I had used when "running the lost race to a finish."

His hand went over impulsively, for just an instant, and rested on mine while I drove, then bashfully withdrew as if remembering that we were no longer boys, but men involved in a momentous, perhaps tragic, enterprise.

We didn't spare the time to eat. We passed through San Sabastin's gay summer-night's lights, its cafés with crowded pavements throbbing with

swinging tunes from string bands, its loiterers, its groups of promenading señoritas with mantillas, ogled by cavaliers of youth, and felt the clean sweep of open spaces racing upon us again. And again I settled into my seat and opened the roaring Hispano wide.

Roadside trees again shot past us, as if in frightened retreat—a procession of pale, pillared ghosts—and others opened out ahead like startled sentinels on parade, but making room for us to pass. Towns and hamlets, aroused from sleep, stared at us as we ripped their silence with our humming machine and, before they could realize us, were gone.

Passing cars became less frequent, seemed to have vanished from the road and we were left alone with the stars, a newly risen moon and night odors. Tunnels of trees, roadsides bordered with wild bloom that shone like white clouds until we swept abreast them, open spaces, sometimes the glimmer of placid seas on our left, uphill—downhill—short, level stretches, sharp turns with the little warning "Z" on a flashing guidepost and here and there the "X" telling us to slow down—all a reiterated jumble through which I shot the car in a night race against time and revolt.

WE had time, but not revolt, in hand when we neared the frontier and the lights of Irun glimmered faintly in combat with the half light of the moon. It would be the last Spanish city of importance through which we must pass, for, but a few miles beyond, came the little hamlet at the end of the international bridge, half in Spain, half in France, and overlooking that famous Isle of Pheasants, neutral, in the middle of the river where wars had been ended, treaties made and marriages arranged —perhaps the most historical ground of its size in all of Europe

Into Irun we came with speed checked lest we arouse the anger of some night patrolman and with Monty beside me directing: "Right. Now left—mind a sharp turn around the next shops."

Narrow streets were bordered by high buildings which resounded with echoes. There was a broader street and then a sharp, *"Halte!"* and the grate of brakes at a street corner.

We saw four men—one a policeman, another a smart captain of the Spanish regulars, and two soldiers with rifles held in a most businesslike way. Ahead of us, resting apparently at ease or swarming into cafés whose disorder betokened surprise, was a road filled with soldiers. They lounged here and there, talking volubly, or seated in listless attitudes as if wearied by an unexpected march.

"Your papers please and—who are you?" the officer demanded.

"Tourists, Señor Officer. Two of us Americans, two of us Spanish," said Monty, with no hesitancy. "Returning to Biarritz, where we all stop. And our papers——" He collected them from us and passed them over.

The officer was uncompromising, although evidently influenced by Monty's bearing and readiness.

"I am compelled to trouble you and all the others to dismount," he said, "and we must search your car."

"Certainly, if you wish," Monty returned, and we climbed swiftly out into the road.

A brusque order and—the way those soldiers searched the car left nothing wanting in thoroughness. The officer in the meantime opened our passports, scanned them closely and, turning, bowed deeply to the Contessa Amparra.

"I am sorry," he said courteously, "to put the señorita and her companions to such delay; but the circumstances are unusual. There are reasons why—— The truth is that the frontier has been put under military surveillance to-night

and—— I regret to have to detain you here until morning.

"But, señor!" protested the contessa. "We knew nothing of military matters when we started to Biarritz." She stepped closer to him and looked up into his face with such an air of distress that the cavalier that lives in the heart of every well-bred man in Spain could not resist. "It would be very awkward for us to be held here all night. I must return to my hotel in Biarritz. Already we are late. Can you not tell us the cause of this most unusual measure?"

Plainly he was troubled. He scanned the passports once more, as if to reassure himself, but I surmised that he was merely seeking time for a decision. Many conditions and exigencies must have passed his mind; two well-known names of the Spanish nobility and two Americans who might be of no importance at all, or of such influence as to cause criticism of his tact and discretion. I sympathized with him in his predicament. He turned and looked at his two soldiers who, having finished the examination of the car, stood at attention in waiting.

"Nothing, Señor Capitano. We find nothing whatever, save the customary tools and spares," one of them, a noncom, said.

It ended the officer's indecision. He folded the passports, handed them back to Monty, bowed and said: "Under the circumstances, it seems to me that I am justified in letting you pass. It is very awkward for a lady and—— Wait a moment! I will give a note to the commanding officer at the bridgehead."

Monty thanked him and, with a scrawled note in hand, we crawled into the car, exchanged the civilities of a good night and drove onward. The lounging soldiers barely glanced at us as we drove from sight, a grave, troubled and questioning quartet. I slowed down the car so that we could all talk. We did so hurriedly, concerned, alarmed.

We agreed that, if we were in time, we had news which would end temporarily, in any case, one end of the revolt. The fact that soldiers had been hastily pushed to the frontier was a clear evidence that Spain knew at least something of what was afoot and was prepared to meet it. It remained a question of how much was known and we could but drive on, in hope.

AT the bridgehead, the note from the officer sufficed. Many men were here and in the outer glow of the headlights we saw two machine guns planted beside the graystone abutments that from the fifteenth century had known many such assemblages of troops to repel invaders. A major was in command. He bowed, took the card from the captain, read it, hesitated, ran a worried hand over his forehead beneath his cap, glanced at our passports and then handed them back, saying:

"This matter may be a mare's nest, or something more serious. I know not. It may be nothing more than a practice march. But it is reported that at some point along this border tonight, revolutionists propose to invade Spain. We are sorry to have inconvenienced you. But—you have been examined, no reason has been found for detaining you in Irun, so I see no reason why I should not permit you to pass. You may do so."

Then, with a wave of his hand to us and a curt order to the guards, he motioned us onward and we crawled over the bridge into the receptive inspection of the French customs officers. There we were almost driven frantic by their slowness in passing us. After innumerable delays, they at last permitted us to go on. We drove out into the road leading upward through long avenues, headed for Saint Jean de Luz and safely across the border.

Time was beating us at last. Delays had hung chains across our route. Our schedule was torn to pieces and the dim light over the clock dial told me that we had lost more than an hour; that, unless we blundered into the assemblage of revolutionaries by mere chance, we could do nothing to avert the recklessly conceived and folly-ridden plans of the night that were now plainly doomed to failure and tragedy.

I felt Monty's hand resting on my arm and slowed slightly, while I bent my head toward his.

"We're going to be too late, old man," he said, in my ear. "What do you think is left for us to try?"

"I'll be hanged if I know," I admitted. "You know the country. I don't. Can't you suggest something?"

"If it wasn't for her—her," he said, gesturing with his hand toward the rear seat where the contessa sat, doubtless rigid and distressed, "I'd say let the idiots blunder in and get what they merit, but——"

"Do you suppose her father has been fool enough to go into the trap personally?" I asked.

"Undoubtedly! He'd go if he knew that soldiers were waiting across the border with rifles at the ready, waiting to clean them out. He'd go all the sooner then, because he'd not care to live if his followers got the worst of it. Fool he may be, but—he'd try to finish leading them. The Count de Rios y Ruiz is a man of honor. You'd admire him, as every one does, if you knew him."

He leaned back for a moment and I let the big car out again, driving it to the limit, when I again felt his restraining hand on my arm.

"Listen," he said. "If what we have heard is right, and they are going to center on Vera, there are but two good ways by which it can be reached from the French side. One is by the way of La Venta, which is reached from this side of Saint Jean de Luz and is high up in the tops of the Basses-Pyrenees. It's about five miles from here in an air line and hard going. There is a fine road, but difficult, that winds down from there to Vera, which is a town of about two thousand inhabitants in the hollows beneath—in the heart of mountains. But an army invading would most likely take that route.

"The other way is by Ascain to Sare. This road also is in the tops of the mountains, somewhat to the left of the other, and, if followed long enough, reaches the Peak d'Ibantelly over the top of which the frontier crosses. There is a dirt road, not too good, very winding and steep, that runs from there down into Vera. It is about five miles from the top of the peak down into Vera. Now it seems probable to me that the invaders will march over the road to La Venta, and that, if we take that route, we shall either intercept them or follow on their heels. What do you think?"

I stopped the car and hastily consulted the others. I switched on the lights inside. It showed the contessa's face, strained, set, almost despairing; but not yet, despite all the exasperating obstacles and delays, did she falter.

"On! On to La Venta!" she cried, and I saw that her lips were muttering something more silently, like a whispered prayer.

WE turned off in the outskirts of Saint Jean de Luz and passed the shadowy outlines of a golf course, its bunkers showing beneath the moon like prehistoric, nocturnal, herbaceous monsters crawling over the grass of the fairways. I doubted not that in the daylight to come men would play over it unaware, or careless of, the tragedies of the hills behind, sport and death rubbing elbows there in the rugged old mountains which would be heedless of both.

The road was no longer easy, a dirt road, not too well kept. It twisted sometimes in switchback, or with hairpin turns, always climbing. Stunted sycamore trees and osiers, trimmed until they seemed aged, mutilated dwarfs, ranged on either side. Ascending, we met other trees, leaning away as if harassed by constant winds from the gorges below. We reached a tiny little hut at a branching road, and even as Monty called, "The one to the left is that which leads to Ascain," were halted by a lounging customs officer; for on that sector, where smuggling between France and Spain goes on as it has for centuries, men are constantly alert. The man appeared to be unusually so and, as he examined us, said:

"Something funny going on to-night! Can't make it out. The patrol saw men, many of them, slipping this way an hour or two ago. Those we stopped had no contraband, but all had arms—mostly heavy revolvers—so all we could do was to let them pass. It's a hard climb up to La Venta, the frontier, and I doubt if they will let you through into Spain to-night."

"Can we overtake those—the men who passed?" I asked.

He stood thoughtfully for a moment, then said: "Perhaps. I am an old soldier. These men carried heavy knapsacks, some with cartridges. I know what carrying such weight means over such steep climbs and roads as these. They'll not travel fast. Perhaps."

CHAPTER XII.

MACHINE GUNS POPPING.

ALL the strain to which I had put that faithful car, throughout the night, was as nothing to what I now demanded from it. None but a maniac or one racing for life and death would have ventured such speeds up such a road. We reached a twisting place bordered on one side by hills and the other by a cañon, in the deep bottom of which a stream glittered in the moonlight and where sometimes we skidded perilously. Across from us faint trails were visible and Monty pointed them out and told me they were paths down which Spanish smugglers drove their laden mules.

The gorse here and there was in bloom, its golden yellow still brilliant in the night. We swung round a sharp turn and the powerful lights made their sweep and rested on the road and—— With a muttered objurgation, I jerked the car to a halt to avoid running over a man who lay in the dust, across the very center of our path. The wheels were within a yard of him when, panting, hot, the car came to a stop.

Monty and I were out of the car and lifting him up before the echoes had died.

"He's been shot!" Monty exclaimed. "He's been shot through this side I'm holding."

"I have a flask of brandy in my bag," we heard, and, looking over my shoulder, I saw that the contessa had reached the man almost as soon as we had and that Tilly was lurching toward us.

She ran back to the car, dived into its darkness and in a moment reappeared with a little silver flask in her hands. While we held the man's shoulders and head, she trickled the liquor between his lips. He gasped, opened his eyes and stared at us in bewilderment. He began muttering incoherent sentences in Spanish and she, like a sister of mercy, brushed the mop of sweaty, dust-grimed hair back from his forehead and said soothingly:

"There! There, friend! We have come to help you."

"Am I—am I—in France?" he asked, and, when told that he was, he sighed and betrayed relief.

"And—and who are you?" he asked, his eyes on the contessa.

She told him her name and suddenly he tried to sit more erect and said:

"You are the daughter of El Conde de los Rios y Luiz!" He struggled still higher and cried to her, with painfully lifted hands: "Go back, contessa! Go back! Go no farther on this road. For they will kill you if you do—the soldiers of the king. They are there by now—at La Venta. Go not ahead. You should not be here!"

"And how do you know this?" she asked, and, before her final word was issued, he shot out a torrent of Spanish so fast, so voluble, that, despite my good knowledge of his tongue, I had difficulty in following it.

"Either there has been a blunder, or we have been betrayed! I know not which; but this I know, that the party of us which came this way and were to overcome the La Venta guard, hold the place and send the others on down the great road to Vera, found many men, instead of few which we anticipated. They held us up and we fought. In the attack I was shot and dragged my way here; for I could not encumber my friends if they won and would be bayoneted if we lost. I know nothing save that. But ours was the smaller advance. The main body, with your father in command, were to go down over the Pic d'Ibantelly to surprise Vera from that side."

We got from him the details of the attack, even while we stripped his clothing and bandaged a gaping wound in his right side. The revolutionists had come from their places of exile in France, come by batches of from ten to thirty, and concentrated in Saint Jean de Luz, that sleepy, peaceful little seaport on the French side of the border.

They had come in groups, when night fell, and an army of more than two hundred and fifty assembled on that golf course whose shadows lay still, peaceful and secluded, and there had been given arms. Pitifully inadequate, they seemed to me, and badly prepared, inasmuch as they were without transport and each enthusiast had been compelled to stagger upward into a high and forbidding mountain range with forty pounds weight upon his back. Men can't make speed on the level with such a weight!

THE main force was to take the route over the peak. The second and smaller detachment, of which he had been a unit, was to possess itself of La Venta, a mere post and of no importance, but a post. The men, hastening downward, were to attack Vera from one side while the others came in from another. The plan was good.

Vera and two good highways across the frontier would have been theirs, but for a betrayal, or a leakage, somewhere —and where, no one knows. Perhaps in distant Paris, or in some of these interior places, such as that in Viscaya where we had failed to stop a flow of arms. To us, however, the important link was on the other side of the mountains that surrounded us with a network of chasms, hills, peaks and here and there a tiny farm. It was there that the Count Ruiz had gone and it was there that we must go.

We carried the wounded man back to the car. I found a place where, with many reverses, I could turn it about and, with him propped up between the contessa and Tilly, I shot down the hill. I was sorry for the sufferings of that poor, misguided, hurt soldier of a lost cause, but still harbored hope that we might avert further disaster to many others and——

I don't like to think of that drive! I couldn't do it again. I wouldn't have done it then, save that I was urged by desperation, the frantic hope of saving scores of men from death or wounds. War taught one pity, and—it seems to me—futility. I wasn't merciless to him, our passenger, but I shut my mind against everything save the necessity for speed.

So, rocking, sliding, sometimes with a wheel whirling in space, we shot, fell, blundered, forged downward until we came to a Basque farmhouse with its gently sloping red roofs, its patterned strips of wood laid against white walls, its broad low windows, and there aroused the occupants and enlisted their sympathies. We carried the wounded man out and laid him on the bed they selected, assured of their kindliness and care. He was unconscious and had been for some time, for Heaven is merciful in the end.

NOW we were off again, after that pause, and soon were scaling hills, going back to the main theater of the night's drama, that wild, rugged, still sweep of peaks and mountains above which the Peak d'Ibantelly stared like an aloof and austere spectator who could see over the heads and shoulders of all others as the tragedy was played to its finale.

We tore through the villages of Ascain and Sare and found these towns sleeping as peacefully as if a little army of more than two hundred men had not passed through, or at least close by them, in the night. They must have moved noiselessly, these revolutionists, sweating beneath their packs, to which none of them probably were accustomed, and many of whom had perhaps never before carried a weight upon their shoulders.

A very large number were city men, unused to walking on anything but pavements. For such, the fatigues of that night march must have been almost unendurable; but they had forged onward, foolishly determined, doggedly courageous, making no noise.

We reached an abandoned mine and there found the watchman and his aged wife standing in the new clear moonlight and staring at us. Behind them in the cottage, the light of a lamp threw squares of yellow through the tiny windowpanes and open doorway. They fled back to their house as if frightened when I stopped the steaming car and Monty called to them.

They did not understand his Spanish, although all their lives they had lived there on the very edge of Spain. They answered something in a guttural Basque, which is a tongue that none save those born in it ever fully acquire. Monty then tried them in French, and the old woman responded, although her husband shook his head.

"It is something not to be understood," she said, when assured that we meant them no harm. *"Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu! Les pauvre enfants!* An army of them! They came past here and the first aroused us and asked for water to drink and threw themselves upon the ground. Some of them went instantly to sleep. And then came others and still others and more, until the roadway was filled with them, the last coming with sore and dragging feet.

"Some of them wore shoes unfit for mountains or for roads, shoes from which the soles had worn through. Some came with no shoes at all, limping on tender feet. They suffered, those boys who came last—three, two, one at a time. Then, when they were all here and somewhat rested, a man who had a gray mustache and white hair made them get into line in the road —quite where your car is, monsieur, he stood—and took off his hat and talked to them in Spanish.

"He pointed toward Spain, which is just there—across this very cañon—and in the end they would have cheered him had he not held up his hands for silence. Eloquent hands they were, monsieur, the hands of an aged gentleman, and whose message I, who know but little Spanish, could understand. And then he thanked us very graciously in French for our water, bowed to me very deeply, gave some command and

they, the poor, tired boys and hard grim men of many ages, stiffened themselves, picked up their packs and marched onward up that road which leads to Vera in the lands of Spain.

"Their feet dragged, but they went, trying to march like soldiers—and, monsieur, I think that whether they conquer Spain or not, these were very brave and gentle men!"

"How long ago was this?" I asked, hope springing high that we should yet be in time to save them from a catastrophe, from walking into a trap, provided the forces of Spain had had sufficient time to reach Vera before them and receive them—with machine guns and rifles, in the hands of disciplined, trained and prepared troops.

The old housewife talked to her husband in Basque. They were disputing.

"I say it was more than three hours ago, monsieur, but my man says it was but two. So one of us is a fool, but then——"

My hopes, so brief, fell. It mattered but little whether it was two hours or three hours since the revolutionists headed by the contessa's father had passed on. They were certainly in Spain by now. Yet we must hasten onward, to see if anything could be done. I started the car forward even while shouting thanks for the information so freely given.

Again we climbed along the crest of the Basses-Pyrenees. Peak d'Ibantelly rose majestic in the night, its outlines clear, and now and then we could see over the tops of the enormous array of mountains and hills beneath. Lights of far-off towns in France showed like distant stars. Soft winds stirred the sleeping, dwarfed trees.

"The road crosses the border line just around that bend ahead," Monty warned me.

I slowed down, made the turn and saw a low white building ahead of us. We stopped in front of it, waiting for a challenge, but none came. No light could be seen. Then we noticed that the door was open and called, without eliciting a response. Monty and I jumped out, went to the door and looked inside, aided by the torch I had taken from its socket.

THE room was in confusion, chairs overthrown, an empty wine bottle and part of a meal left on the table. An old Spanish tunic and forage cap hung on a hook; a guard's overcoat had been left thrown across the back of a chair; and that was all. Evidently the count's army had either surprised and overcome the guard and made them prisoners, or the latter had discovered the advance in time to escape and take to the hills.

Tilly and the contessa, puzzled by our delay, dismounted and came to join us. We walked outside, considering whether we should continue our way across the border. The guards' post stood in a commanding spot. In front of it was the level road, behind it a deep valley stretching downward into darkness and, to the left, a vast sweep of mountains and hollows affording a wide view. Far below, but seeming quite near in an air line, lights could be seen and Monty had just said, "I think those must be the lights of Vera," when the stillness was abruptly ended. First came a single snapping report, then others in rapid succession and then volleys of rifle fire.

"Late! Oh, Mother of Sorrows, we are too late!" The contessa's voice wailed, as if she had bent to despair.

We three men looked at one another, helplessly unable to find words of encouragement. Indeed to have said anything tending to encouragement would have been to lie so flagrantly as to sound hypocritical. So we said nothing, but stood there listening to that spattering *snap! snap-snap-snap!* of distant rifles that had by now increased

in volume until it bespoke, to accustomed ears, a considerable engagement.

"All that is missing is—ummh—the damn growl of the big guns—and, yes—there it comes!—machine gun opened up! And at Château Thierry they had some——"

Tilly's voice, for once grave, muttered along and until that moment I hadn't known that he, too, had been in that war where "death became a gamble and life a joke." He and I knew, then, that Spain hadn't been caught at Vera unawares, and the girl who now stood beside us wringing her clasped hands and shuddering with each burst of sound was perhaps at that moment fatherless and most certainly the penniless victim of Spanish confiscatory laws.

Her estates in that distant Viscaya, from which we had that night traveled with unremitting speed, would know her, and hers, no more; for on the morrow they would be forfeit to the crown. And in that moment I could have cursed the folly of that mad old father of hers, the Count of Rios y Ruiz, but most of all, I could find hatred for that scheming, striving, plotting thug that had led them all into this tragedy, Midnight Carson from Oklahoma and—God knows where!

Carson would lose money. That would be all. It was his life that he should have forfeited, but he could be trusted to keep that from the remotest danger while his dupes took all the risks and, down there in the valleys below, where the lights now flashed strongly, were paying in death for his machinations.

CHAPTER XIII.

A FIGHT TO THE FINISH.

THERE was nothing—absolutely nothing!—that we could do but stand there on the bleak mountaintop and wait. The firing swept hither and yon and finally died away to single fusillades here and there in widely scattered places, each volley telling its tale of a separate and isolated combat being fought to its bitter and tragic end. Remembering it now, I think that in all the time, from mysterious darkness wed to late moonlight, until the stars began to fade with the early approach of dawn, we spoke but little.

The chill winds of altitude came as the morning approached and we began to move backward and forward to keep warm, listening always, silent ever. I walked a few steps here and a few steps there, my heart crying to help the daughter of a valiant old fool and finding no way. Finally I went back to the Hispano that stood there in the road, cold, stolid, like a patient monster that, having done its hard mission of speed, was stolidly at rest, and from it took my driving coat, that had been thrown by accident into a bundle at my feet, and brought it out.

I flung it open, shook its folds loose to clear from it the dust of the long roads and put it over her shoulders. Startled, she shifted her gaze from the mysterious and repellent lands of drama beneath wherein her father fought, or was dead, and for a moment looked at me.

"I'm sorry that this is all I can do for you," I said.

She turned impulsively, with that leathern jacket thrown over her shoulders, clutched the lapels of my coat and said: "My friend! Oh, my friend! I know and you understand! You have done all that any man could do and—I thank you! I do! But——"

I don't know what more she might have said in that terrible time of strain, but we were interrupted by the sound of firing close at hand. It had been coming closer and closer, perceptibly, for hours; but we were startled and surprised to hear it there across the cañon, whose very edge was at our feet.

In that early dawn its bottom lay as if in purpled mystery and in the stronger light of altitude we could vaguely discern its opposite side, where the outlines of rock and tree and gorse were becoming more clearly defined. It was there that we had heard that closest outburst of spiteful sound, like the yelping of unquenchable, untiring hatred.

We gathered together, we observers, breathlessly waiting, like four helpless sheep watching butchers, until our shoulders were rubbing; almost—but not quite; for we three men were standing like a shield, shoulder to shoulder, making a tiny sheltering, segmentary arc of a circle within whose center stood the little contessa, like one unaware of our solicitude.

THE tiny battle played its vicissitudes before our eyes—barely distinguishable; first, four men, mere obscure shapes running to and fro from shelter to shelter, and seven others, dim figures flitting from gorse to rock, from tree to boulder, firing when opportunity offered, but always relentless. Three more men came from over the hilltops and participated and our ears told us that they, the reënforcements, were Spanish regulars; for the reports of their firing told that theirs were regulation rifles.

One doesn't extend apologies, or excuses, or reasons for being a fool. Nor can any of us afterward explain his own motives and impulses of action. At least, I can't. But I know that in a quivering second my blood was hot, my sense of equal odds and a fair fight invoked, my sympathies insanely cast on the side of the few valiant against the remorseless many, and—I came to my senses when I stumbled over a creeper and heard myself cursing the inequalities of the ground over which I was running downward across the dim cañon.

Then I splashed through the shallows of a mountain stream and began to climb, thinking of nothing other than throwing my own weight into the scale of that pitiful minority. They weren't friends of mine. I had no sympathy with their purpose. The cause for which they fought was to me of the utmost indifference; but they were poor devils outnumbered and they were on the side of the father of that girl whom I had discovered, in an incredibly brilliant burst of revelation, I loved. It was in a sense her side on which they fought, those men who were being shot down, and so it was on her side that I plunged in.

My recklessness nearly cost me my life. A rifle bullet buzzed past my ear. I hadn't fought in France for nothing. I hadn't done a spell in the trenches and charged across the deadly aridities of a no man's land without learning the meaning of such messages and instinctively I threw myself behind a rocky projection and, with an effort that was almost like muscular action, seizing my senses and brought them to command. It didn't take much time. A habit of training comes back. I was again a soldier taking cover, realizing that on my wits alone must I depend, that it is the coolness of a fighter that counts and that brave fervency wins no wars.

I laid there with the heavy automatic pistol in my hand, listening, and around me at intervals came the sounds of firing. I crawled on my stomach to the edge of my rocks. A man, who was so close that both he and I were surprised, fired. I saw his uniform and knew him as a enemy and fired almost before the echoes of his shot ripped through the quietude of the dawn. I saw his rifle pitch upward, as he fell, and bolted from cover, past him and upward toward another shelter.

My cap flew away from my head, whirling out into the air. A man thrust toward me with a bayoneted rifle and

I caught it in my left hand and with my right put my weight against his astonished face. He went down, leaving me with the rifle in hand, and I rushed upward again, trying to direct my steps to the heart of the conflict.

"This way! This way!" A voice shouted and, jumping from cover to cover, I ran toward it.

In front of me a rifle spoke and, throwing myself on my elbows, I waited for it to be fired again. Before its flash had expired, I had shot. A man shrieked: "Compadres! Compadres, I am shot, and——" That was all.

I never saw the man. I had nothing against him—no dislike—nothing but the feeling that he was one of those against my side and—pity that it should have been necessary in self-preservation for me to use experienced skill against his life.

I DODGED forward again, scarcely realizing the battle had narrowed down to confined limits and not at all thinking that I had put three enemies out of action; for, now that I was in it, those soldiers of Spain, doing their duty, obeying just orders, had become enemies of mine. I wish it could have been otherwise.

Again a voice called, in Spanish and close at hand: "Here! Revolto! Here we are behind the little peak. Be careful. There is a man over to the left. Guard the left!"

I did. I crawled from gray rock to gray rock, gorse clump to gorse clump, while all around me steel-clad bullets sang their spiteful song. Then I found myself climbing a sheer face of rock, five or six feet in height, and felt a hand clutch mine and pull me, panting, to shelter. I had come to the refuge of an old and wounded lion in his last and hopeless stand.

Three men were there behind that last shield; one unhurt, who had assisted me; another with a crude bandage wrapped about his head from beneath which long streaks of red streaked down across his cheek; and the other a white-haired man, standing on one leg, resting a rifle across a rock with one arm that cuddled it to his shoulder, while the other hung limp and broken by his side. He turned and looked at me calmly, no fear or hurt betraying itself in his eyes, and said:

"Pardon me, friend, I don't recognize you. But you fight well in this, our finish."

"Nor do I know you, señor," I began, and was interrupted by the man who had helped me to safety with:

"This is our leader, El Conde de los Rios y Ruiz. Can't you see who it is, you stupid?"

The harshness of his voice evoked memories. This was the man in room No. 12 of the hotel that seemed now so far and forlornly distant from this meeting place.

"And so," thought I, "at last I meet Amparra's father—when it's all too late and he is, as he says, fighting to the end."

This was the man we had tried so long to save; but he didn't seem an object of pity as he stood there, grave yet smiling, courteous yet intent, apparently wounded until but a part of his body was yet obedient—fighting to his finish!

There was time for neither speech nor explanation. From two sides rifle fire was turned upon us. The harsh-voiced man jumped, fired, twisted and would have pitched over the edge of the little decline had I not caught him in my arms to save his fall. I laid him at my feet, while he grimly cursed between set teeth and clutched his wound.

I took his rifle. The fire from that side seemed to have ceased, but on the other it was rapid and persistent. The count, on one foot, with one arm, was steadily replying, and the man with the

bandage who had never turned was shooting as steadily and patiently as if this were a purely mechanical occupation.

"Got one!" he said grimly, and fired again as the terse words were uttered. "Got another, I think—— No—there he shows again—— Ah!"

He settled quietly downward, as if to rest on his haunches. Nothing but the fact that he had let go of his rifle and that it was falling, rolling, bumping from one projecting rock to another to lodge beneath us told that he had held it until he could hold it no more. He sagged down, but didn't stop in his sitting posture. He leaned wearily over from his knees and hips to one side and then his arms threw themselves listlessly outward as if he had succumbed to sleep. And he had. His battle was done forever.

I JUMPED to his place. A man's head showed for an instant; I fired. A lance of flame tore across the bare top of my scalp and I fired again, vindictively, angrily, as if a strange man had struck me an unexpected and unprovoked blow. The blob of shape that was fairly visible above the edge of a boulder remained there and I fired twice again as rapidly as I could discharge and pull. The shape appeared to twitch and rock sidewise each time, and it wasn't until then, in that passage of time which seemed long and was nearly nothing, that I knew that further shooting was unnecessary.

I waited for another target. None was offered. Everything had assumed the stillness of peace, of dawn that had opened beneficently upon a world, a dawn that cried: "I am the peacemaker! Why war? I fight not. Come to an embrace which gives life to the quiescent, awakens to activity the sleeping, and is without hatred of anything."

For a vague instant I wondered why it was still, why I heard no further inimicable sounds, why those behind me weren't still sending bullets out to slay some one for whom they had no personal animosity. I was dazed momentarily by that peculiar and contrasting quietude. I saw nothing in front of me from which I must defend myself. Nothing moved.

Even the dawn breeze had passed and the fronds of gorse, golden or rusty red, were motionless. The pine tree on top of our fortress, shrunken and withered but clinging to life with all its hardships, hadn't a quiver in all its pitiful needles. In the pallid light of the morning, I turned like one awakening from a daze and sought those companions of mine whom I had never known, on whose side I had volunteered, with whose designs I had neither sympathy nor acquiescence.

The man with the bandaged head was dead, staring through half-closed eyes at his right and outflung arm, as if pondering a mischance that it no longer clung to the weapon which he had fired until it was warm. He stared with a look of hurt, as if now he accused himself of recalcitrance. The man whose harsh voice had been my sole link of identification lay there, brawny, big frame twitching, feet twisting restlessly, one hand widely thrown, the other with clutching fingers grasping the folds of his clothing above his chest.

And fallen across a corner of that tragic little plateau of rocks, which had offered us refuge in our need, lay that white-haired old lion who had fought with but one leg and one arm, calm and courteous to the last, never flurried, never surrendering, preserving to the end a perhaps forced placidity, the Conde de los Rios y Ruiz.

I thought that he was beyond assistance and turned my attention to the man I had never had much use for, that man with the harsh voice. He alone gave indications of lingering life. But it was useless. Everything I could

do was so pitifully futile. He opened his eyes, when I lifted him upward to a sitting posture, smiled and said:

"You're—you're that chauffeur whom the contessa brought in and—Marnier! Poor Marnier was to get you out of the way—and—and—I think he was one of those whom they took into the pelota court down there in Vera and shot! Machine gun they used on them—there in the court where pelota is played and—— All gone! We heard them when, knowing that it was lost, we tried to get the count away. Sorry for the count. Gentleman! Honor! For Spain—always! and——"

He seemed to meditate, there in my arms, dying, dreamily looking off into distances as over that land he must have loved, that land of Spain, and then in his last gasp fought for strength to be chivalrous and valiant and gentlemanly and said, as if wishing to make amends:

"Sorry I thought you were against us. You've proved that we are all fools, because you fought for and not against us. And—it's all been a waste! Waste! They've won!"

I held him in my arms and shook him as if with hope that physical movement could hold life within him, but it was useless. He died there in that moment with his eyes wide, appraising, approving, on mine. And I think that there passed out a man whom, though I had never known, I could have loved under more fortuitous conditions—a gentleman of Spain! I've thought of him sometimes since then, and I've been sorry that the game of life didn't let us know and understand each other better, long before that instant when we came to know, and he died, there on the rocks in the summer's dawn.

All firing had ceased. It was very quiet. The chirping of a bird, indifferent to causes, hopes, battles and tragedies, disturbed me as it began its half-drowsy call. I laid the man, I had never known, down and turned my attention to that gray-haired one, who lay with his face buried in his arms as if secure and asleep. I turned him over and felt for a heartbeat. It was still there. I thought that the least I could do, as he was still alive, would be to carry him down the hill, across the ravine and to the arms of his daughter who had so hardly, so desperately, so valiantly tried to save him.

I don't remember that I longer sustained fear of enemies. They were forgotten in that peace of dawn. Indeed I recall nothing, save that I gathered his placid, spent, and age-withered body up and half fell, half clambered down the rocks, then off into vague spaces, long and trying, always downward, always causing me to stumble, and that there was an awful, a painful, stillness everywhere about us, except for the fluted notes of that bird that chuckled and warbled and jeered, as if ridiculing the striving and failures of all men.

THE beat of rifles had all gone. I felt that I alone lived, I who had nothing whatever to do with all this cause so gravely disputed. The daylight was crawling, too, over the rugged tops of the mountains and I had a vague hatred for its advent, as if something whispered that darkness could not be my last shield and succor. Brush crashed as if broken through by an enemy. A rock, dislodged, rolled down to meet me. I caught my burden closer, resolved to hold it to the last or until I could lay it in the arms of the girl I now knew I loved.

"You can't have him! You can't! He belongs to her, and if you try to take him from me, you'll have to put up a fight for it!" I cried.

The brush still smashed. Vague voices joined that disturbing song of the bird. They sounded familiar and

incoherent, and the last thing I could understand was:

"There he is! Come here, both of you! He's wounded and he's got somebody in his arms, and——"

Still holding to that inert burden in my arms, that old lion of the last stand, I pitched forward on weakened knees and tottering legs and was swept into a kindly and welcomed rest of oblivion. I am certain now that death can be nothing more than that, an end to all troubles and all striving, something that kindly reaches out and incloses us in restful, and tender, embracing arms. Infancy and death are just the same—a mother yearning and ready to receive and shield.

CHAPTER XIV.

ON SAFE GROUND.

THE sun hurt my eyes. I had been aware that it hurt for a long, long time. I lifted my arm to defend myself from its stabbing light. It had taken repeated efforts to make my arm obey. It was a disobedient, heavy thing to lift—up there to shield my eyes. It wouldn't respond. Then when, at last, it did, a voice very far away suddenly shouted:

"He's alive! He lifted his arm! He's not dead!"

Absurd clamor! Why should any one think I was dead? What fools were these to think me dead! Two faces finally cleared to my recognition, that of the contessa, who was on her knees on one side, and of Tilly on the other. I seemed to be heavily bandaged on my right side and a bandage had been wrapped about my head. I lifted it and looked around. The place was wholly unfamiliar, a little sward of green that had been closely cropped by sheep, some of the prevalent gnarled sycamore trees and gorse all about us. I could see no sign of car or road.

"Where——" I began, still searching for something familiar.

"Steady, old man! Perhaps it's not good for you to talk. I'll tell you about it," Tilly said, with a most extraordinary gravity in his voice. "You are well over the border on the French side. We got you and the count into the car, as quickly as we could, and Monty drove her well away from the border as hard as she could tear, because before we could get started the tops of the hills on the Spanish side were alive with soldiers who were out for blood and—well—I don't think they would have been any too careful about that boundary line.

"In fact, they fired at us after we were well into France. Got several bullets through the back of the Hispano, but fortunately they didn't get a tire or anything that could stop us. They were so sore that, when they gave up and let us go, they stood there shaking their fists at us like a lot of madmen. If they could have caught us, they'd have——" He made a queer cluck with his tongue and shook his head.

"But—but why did we stop here?" I asked.

He looked toward the Contessa Amparra with sympathetic eyes, back at me and then opened his lips as if to speak and—said nothing.

"We stopped on account of my father," the contessa said, and then did a strange thing—leaned over until her eyes, that were filled with an infinite sadness and weariness that was like resignation, rested full on mine and put her hand out, cool, white and slender, and laid it on my cheek as if to quiet me. "He didn't wish to die in the car, but asked to be taken out and laid upon the grass and there—after a time—a very little time—he died. So all your great sacrifice, your great bravery, your wounds, and your unselfishness, my friend, went for naught!"

I closed my eyes in a wave of pity, as her hand was withdrawn, and

thought of that fine old man whom I had never seen but in that last fight where, wounded to death but unvanquished, he battled to the end. "A gentleman of Spain!" That was what they had called him, but to me he seemed something even finer than that, a heroic figure that might have stepped down from the knightly days of a very rigid and distinct chivalry. I turned and looked for the contessa, but she had arisen silently and was gone.

"Over there—gone over to where the old count went to sleep on the grass—his final sleep—on the grass, as he wished to go," Tilly mumbled, and looked away from me as if ashamed of moist eyes. Then he gathered himself and talked quietly, I think for fear she might overhear him and be further distressed by his words.

"He was dying when you brought him to us; but we couldn't spare time, even for that, with that pack of bloodhounds swarming over the hill, intent on getting you and the leader of the revolutionists—perhaps all of us, the contessa included. Damn 'em! They were blood mad and would have killed a woman, or us, with as little compunction as they would a wounded, beaten dog! The old count was game, right to the last, and became conscious before we had made it a couple of miles from the border. We took another road to put some more distance into France. Couldn't feel safe. Bound to get so far in they wouldn't dare follow.

"The count felt he was going and—the jolting of the car was fast killing him. Also, we were afraid it wasn't good for you. So, when he asked to get out, we stopped, unloaded, and Monty took the car and beat it like a crazy man to bring a doctor from the nearest town. I don't know where it is—not too far, I hope. The count spent most of his last breath and words in praising you, couldn't say enough. Before that, he told us what he could of the battle over there by Vera and —— He cried like a baby when he talked of those chaps who went across with him—— His 'poor boys,' he called them. None of them will ever get out! They can't! The only thing that saved us was the car. Those others—well—they had no car. They're done.

"The count felt that. I didn't hear his last words. He was talking of you and—it didn't seem right for me to be there at the end, so I got up and walked away to leave them alone, she holding his poor old head in her lap and arms. And I walked up and down over here by you, scared stiff for fear that you, too, were dying, until she came out and put her hand on my arm and said, 'My father is dead.' The way she said it would break a harder heart than mine—not a sigh—not a tear, not a tremble in her voice, but—but as if she couldn't yet grasp it all, or else was numb with the pain of it. And then I saw you making signs of life and—you know the rest as much as I do. I'm afraid you're pretty badly shot up and —— What's that? I hear something roaring—— Yes, must be Monty in the Hispano."

He stood to his feet. I, listening, could finally distinguish the rocking roar of a car that was being forced to its utmost, coming nearer and nearer, until it stopped out beyond the gorse in the road that I could not see. In another minute a surgeon was bending over me and examining the crude bandages and there was more pain that went through me like knives and I fainted.

CHAPTER XV.

TAPS.

THE next time I knew anything at all was when I awoke in a hospital in Biarritz, within the sound of the great rollers breaking from across the entire Atlantic, that free thing that

knows no hurt, the sea. For a day or two I could learn nothing for the very adequate reason that the hospital tyrants—tyrants of mercy, of course!—wouldn't permit any one I knew to come near me.

It seems that I had lost so much blood in that flight from the border line of Spain that I wasn't altogether too fit. And the peculiar part of that affair is that I don't remember in the least when or how I stopped three rifle bullets, each presented with the hope that it was a messenger of death. Excitement of the fight we were making there behind the rocks, I suppose. One hasn't time when fighting for his life to consider wounds.

It was Monty and Tilly who were first admitted. I was disappointed that my first visit shouldn't be from the contessa. They were very awkward and solicitous and I laughed at them. That seemed to cheer them up. The nurse put them out; but a day or two later they were permitted to remain and talk, telling me many things of which I was in ignorance.

Tilly had been mistaken, for one man did live and escape, that fox-faced Marnier, for whom I never had much use, but who was, after all, gifted with a fox's cunning and, I suppose, was anything but a coward. In fact, he must have been a pretty cool sort of a chap in a pinch, for he is the sole survivor of whom I have ever heard—the sole survivor of that mistaken but gallant little army that marched that night across the border to die for a mistaken cause. From him much was learned; that is, all that can ever be learned.

The men who went over the border at La Venta made bad work of it, needlessly and excitedly killing an inoffensive and unwarned guard and, when at last they took down that steep and winding road to Vera, old, quiet and presumably asleep in the depths of the valley far beneath, they were much too far in advance of the footsore army that had crossed over the Peak d'Ibantelly. Finding themselves ahead of time, they skirted the village to meet their comrades. A shepherd's dog on the outskirts gave the alarm to the regular soldiers who were waiting. The revolutionists of both parties were entrapped. They fought well and foolishly, until scattered like chaff before a gale of wrath. They were killed in groups, or captured in squads, and the latter were marched into Vera and, within fifteen minutes, tried, found guilty and marched out to execution in a pelota court! Stood up against a wall in that early dawn, disarmed, beaten, tired, helpless and shot there in that place devoted to the sportsmanship of a game that is eminently sportsmanlike.

THERE may have been, from the Spanish viewpoint, justice; there was no mercy shown. Expeditious death was the end of their dreams and plans. Batch after batch, as they were captured, they all came to that bleak wall that now stands scarred with significant marks of tragic meaning.

Those lone ones, isolated, who fought to the death against impossible odds out there in the hills of the Basses-Pyrenees, had the happier end. Only the most valiant and resourceful gained that boon of fighting to the death. Marnier escaped by crawling into a cellar and remaining there until he could slip into the mountains, starving, hunted, creeping and, through an intimate knowledge of that country, gained back across the boundary.

The body of El Conde de los Rios y Ruiz sleeps in alien soil, far from the great estates and dignities that were his and his forefathers for centuries past. It may not be always so. It may be that all that held a very brave and gallant soul will soon be carried to another resting place, there in the pleas-

ant land of Viscaya, where the sun shines benign and winds caress with languid fervor those kindly hills. I hope for this. And my reasons may as well be told in sequence.

I was in the hospital for some time, visited almost daily by Monty and Tilly and finally, when I was strong enough to be out of bed, by the Contessa Amparra, the last of her line. Some strange change had come over her—between us, one might say; a change that I couldn't understand and couldn't break down; a reserve that was difficult because I refrained from talking of her father, whose love and loss had to her been matters of profound magnitude. Nor could what I esteemed the grandeur of his end palliate her misery. She hadn't seen him there behind the walls as I had, fighting to the last, gallant in defeat, courteous despite wounds, smiling above despair. She hadn't seen him as I had, and that lack of sight hadn't given her the consoling memory that to die thus was not to have lived in vain.

There in the hospital on a day of miracles came to me the information that my own obstinacy had been remunerative. My demands for that invention of mine had been accepted and I could look forward to an assured financial future; but I was robbed of the exultation of success. That I might become a millionaire didn't seem, then, of such importance. I failed to see how this personal gain could bring happiness to the bereft and desolate contessa.

I knew nothing of her resources, now that her estates had been confiscated, but I was certain that she wouldn't accept money from me. She was too proud. And I was meditating over all that and bothering over it and considering—no, yearning!—to find some method of making matters less difficult for her, when she came. She entered very quietly, pathetic in her mourning, kindly, sympathetic, but reserved.

The surgeon accompanied her and told me that I could go out that day, if I did not go too far, that I must not tire myself, that everything would be all right if I exercised care and caution and that, if the contessa cared to watch over me, a nurse would not be required.

THE Basta rock wasn't far. A voiture of the kind found in Biarritz carried the contessa and me to the steps leading to the bridge that spans the snarling place of the sea between it and the mainland. The voiture driver was kindly; for he left his cab and assisted the contessa to support me until we reached a lonely little refuge high above the waters. There he left us, promising to return at the expiration of an hour.

There was a sun somewhere above us, and I suppose there were many things to observe and interest there in that place, where once before we had sat with the stars shining on the sea; but now we were old. Unaccountably old and saddened, and all in such a brief span of time. We didn't talk of anything serious; indeed, neither of us seemed eager for speech. We couldn't talk banal frivolities and common places after our recent and shared experiences.

Both of us were pervaded and dominated by an intuition, a prescience, that for us this was perhaps the most potent and important hour of our lives. I remember that we had been sitting silently for a long time, before I resolved that none but a coward fears to voice his thoughts and so turned toward her and spoke.

"We are very tired, you and I," I said. "We've hazarded and endured much since that night we sat here—so short a time—so short a—time ago. You were kind to me on that night. You have always been kind. I wasn't able to do much for you; but I tried—did my best. And I'm sorry it was all

of so little use to you, for I would have kept you from sorrow, if I could. I think—I think I'm not much good, after all. But in a few days from now they're going to let me go from there" —I gestured in the direction of the hospital, where they had brought me back to life—"and I'm afraid I can't be your chauffeur any longer. I'd like to be that—yes, I'd be content, I think, to be that—your chauffeur, rather than never be near you any more. I don't know what this catastrophe means to you—for I suppose it's catastrophic—and if——"

"It's a personal catastrophe!" she interrupted, sitting there as motionless as a statue and with her dark eyes fixed absently on the sea that swept away and away, unbroken, to that land of my own on its farthest shores. "My father's honor, the honor of the dead, is black-lined, and—other matters may be troublesome but—aren't important. I think I'm alone."

There isn't a word in our tongue that hurts like that word—"alone!" It cries into the depths of any one who has a soul above that of a dog—no, goes deeper, for even a dog that can make you understand that he is "alone" wrings from you a sympathy and a desire to help.

All that was good within me rushed hotly and impulsively to protest; all the reserves that I had built around the confessions of my heart were overthrown like walls crumbled beneath the mighty blast of God, and her hands were seized by mine and it didn't seem that it was my voice that called there above the sob of the breaking seas:

"Don't! Oh, don't feel that! For you can't ever be alone if all that I would do and be could shield and spare you that! You don't understand—you can't!—I am always something—anything—willing to do what I can."

Then sea and sky and sun and rock were all forgotten. She yielded to my grasping hands, to my hungering arms that pulled her closely to me, with a love that is given to but children and the woman one would protect and hold, and sobbed upon my breast, like a broken, bruised thing that, having endured to the limit of its suffering, at last gives way. As if she were but a child, I held her there in my arms, trying with all that was in me to soothe her, to comfort her, to make her realize that as long as I had anything to give of life, or strength, or ability, she could suffer no more. All that I could give was hers.

THERE may have been others on the Basta that afternoon. I don't know. I don't care. All that I treasure is that to us we were there alone, as if all the world were shut out, forgotten. She cried as none but a woman long repressed can cry, with sobs that quivered through her body, everything abandoned to her grief and, I am pleased to believe, her joy. A strange conflict of emotions that exhausted, brought peace and rest.

The sole important point to me is that she loved me. It was greater, far greater, than anything else. Greater than the after-confidence in which she told me that her father, that valiant old man of the mistaken cause, had told her with his last words that he could wish for her no greater protection than mine and had, with what she esteems to be the inspirational vision of the dying, told her to intrust her life to my care.

I am trying to make good on that. It is a pleasant obligation, easy to fulfill, one that brings daily recompense, reward and happiness.

On the representations of Monty, supported by Tilly, and through the graciousness of the King of Spain, I understand that her estates are to be restored; the recorded blot on an honorable escutcheon erased, forgiven, forgotten.

Money-getter Number .45

By Dane Coolidge

Author of "The Law West of the Pecos," "The Riders from Texas," Etc.

Don't play with genius. It's hurtful, domineering, corrupting. Genius won't truckle with mere man. It lays down its iron-bound terms, and receives compliance or refusal—but no compromise. And so when the divine fire stole into the heart of Arizona "Bud" McWillie, the bad-man-to-be, it made him a poet, willy-nilly, and didn't stop to consider the unsuitability of temperament in a man of action, a stage robber.

IT was in the chill gray of early morning, while the sun still hid behind the buttressed cliffs of Apache Leap and the naked giant cactus of the mesa stood out coldly against the sky, that an unobtrusive little man leading a pack animal rode up the Pinal Road and halted behind the pile of rocks called Robbers' Roost. Except for the time and place there was nothing in this to excite suspicion, but as the stage was due at sunup any true friend of "Bud" McWillie would wish to see him elsewhere, especially as he had money-getter number .45 slung low against his leg. In the hush of dawn the thunder of the Silver King mills came pulsing over the ridges from Pinal—*chug-a-chug-a-chug*—and from behind his barrier McWillie grinned slyly. Being naturally a joker, he could see the humor of that tireless industry.

Though he looked dangerous, with a red bandanna tied across his nose and his sombrero pulled low over his eyes, Bud McWillie had not officiated at the christening of Robbers' Roost. There had been bloodshed upon that occasion —which is bad and shows that the work was raw. The James boys in Kansas did different. Besides, those particular holdups were now making penitentiary bridles down at Yuma. This was McWillie's first try for the treasure. Prior to that morning his activities had been limited to shooting up

Mexican sheep camps and branding *orehannas*—nothing very overt in a cattle country. But if it was a likely calf and off the trail, he had been known to beef the mother and *make* it an *orehanna,* which shows a criminal bent.

Punching cows and busting horses for his old man, he had been raised within sight of square-topped Picket Post, the landmark of the Pinal country, and while he rode the trails too much to suit the Cattlemen's Association, by the residenters he was simply noted as a little wild. But now all it needed was Bill Connors and the stage to give him his start as a "bad man."

AS the sun rose slowly above the top of Apache Leap—where in the old days four hundred stampeded Indians had leaped to their death before the rush of the soldiers—the rumble of wheels sounded from up the cañon; then, jouncing and careening, the stage came hammering along through the chuck holes that marked the turn, and McWillie drew money-getter from its holster. Still grinning nervously beneath his mask, he lay close until the leaders swung past him; then, as the driver came by, juggling with his lines, McWillie rose up suddenly and covered him with his revolver.

"Hands up!" he shouted. *"Whoa!"*

As the stage driver threw on his brake, the leaders drew back and surged away from the pistol, shaking their heads. The christening of Robbers' Roost had made them gun-shy, although in that respect they were no worse than Connors, who threw up his hands, lines, whip and all.

"Don't shoot!" he yelled, and the stage fetched up with a jerk.

"Well, you saved your bacon that time!" remarked the holdup. "Now throw off your treasure and be quick about it."

"All right," answered the driver, and, with some half-mumbled observations about not being hired to get shot at, he heaved the heavy box over the wheel with a bang and craftily chucked the mail bag after it.

"None o' that!" cried McWillie sharply. "Now you just pile out and put the mail bag on again. You must think I'm hunting trouble with Uncle Sam."

Still grumbling, Connors twisted his lines around the brake and dropped to the ground, thanking God, however, that there was no messenger along to start a row. Then with the bag again between his feet he gathered up the lines sulkily.

"Well?" he said, and McWillie lowered his gun.

"You go on down the road," he directed, "and if I see you cutting out a horse or turning back I'll tend to your case later."

Connors kicked off the brake with an ugly bang. "Gee up!" he yapped; and as the stage whipped around the first curve McWillie leaped down and hefted the heavy box.

"Easy money!" he cried triumphantly, dragging the treasure box behind the rocks. "Nothing to do but break the lock."

Half an hour later, with the solid ingots of silver nicely balanced in his bull-hide pack boxes, Bud McWillie stood ready to start on his way, no longer a humble rustler but a genuine Arizona holdup—the kind you read about in the *Examiner.* But somehow there seemed to be something lacking, something funny, to give life and color to the jest. Drawing a revolver cartridge from his belt he picked up the broken cover of the box and made a few marks across it with the bullet—then, just as it came into his head, he scrawled this poem upon the board:

> Don't crowd me, boys,
> I won't be took alive.
> If ennybody asts my name,
> It's "Money-gitter Number .45."

He shot a powder-burned hole underneath for a signature, his horses jumped and the long flight began.

Not that there was anything break-neck about this retreat, for the superintendent of the Silver King did not stand in with the sheriff and the pursuit would be perfunctory, to say the least; but, not to take unnecessary chances, Money-getter kept moving as long as there was daylight, being careful to ride over all the smooth ledges he came across and fight shy of three or four cow camps that lay in behind the Superstition Mountains.

In all the black tangle of buttes and cañons that lay between Apache Leap and the jig-saw summit of the Superstitions there was hardly a trail that Bud McWillie had not traveled, for the cattle-stealing business takes a man into the byways, and at nightfall no one short of an Indian trailer could have followed him. As for the newly sworn posse of deputies that took up the chase, it did not take them the whole day to come round to Bill Connors' matter-of-fact philosophy — whoever this holdup was, they were not being paid to get shot at; and, having zealously run their horses to a standstill, they came stringing back one by one into Pinal and let Mr. Money-getter go.

NOW all this time Bud McWillie, old McWillie's boy, was supposed to be up Queen Creek somewhere, prospecting and, since it might invite unfriendly comment to be seen fifty miles away from camp, riding up the cañon a few hours ahead of a posse, Money-getter kept off the main trails absolutely and took to the rough country like a goat. There was not a puncher riding for Jack Frazer or the Lazy V who did not know Bud McWillie well enough to watch him and, while his reputation as a rustler was fair, McWillie desired to keep it entirely distinct from the fame of Money-getter, the holdup. It was a weary way and rough on his stock; but at the end of three days he broke into the head of Queen Creek without meeting a man and pulled up at his old camp.

Ripped out through a chaos of terraced crags by the rush of sudden cloud-bursts, Queen Creek splits the jagged Pinal Mountains in twain, splintering out at the end into countless washes and blind cañons, the home of outlaw cattle. As for these wild-eyed renegades, many of them bore the sprawling block-and-tackle brand of Bud McWillie, artfully superimposed upon an older mark, and the rest, being unbranded, belonged to any man who could rope or shoot them—which was Bud again. Except for stray prospectors, who may turn up anywhere that a snake can crawl or a buzzard can fly, McWillie had the upper waters of Queen Creek to himself. After hobbling his horses, he carried his treasure into the cave that served him as a home.

There, over an ironwood fire, he quickly melted down the telltale ingots in an iron mortar, pouring the liquid silver into potholes in the wet sand. When the last one was converted into a formless lump, he threw down his hat and laughed hilariously. Whoever could identify those slugs of metal as the stolen treasure of the Silver King! Now with cattle it was different—the brand was not so easy to change, and an *orehanna* calf would bawl for its mother for weeks; but here was a higher medium of exchange, easy to get, easy to carry, compact as money itself—and a simple charcoal fire would change it from a trim ingot, stamped "Silver King," to a chunk of metal that any high-grade assayer would buy.

A few days after making this remarkable discovery, Bud McWillie rode into Globe and surprised several no-questions-asked assayers by the frequency with which he brought in lumps

of silver. At the end of a week, during which McWillie had led the town in a fanatical assault upon a certain faro bank, a conservative member of the assaying profession ventured to speak a word on the subject, although it was none of his business.

"You high graders over at Silver King seem to find pretty good pickings these days," he observed, juggling his scales to make them come short weight.

"Huh?" grunted McWillie drowsily. Then, seeing that the assayer was regarding him fixedly, he flared up into a proper resentment. "Well, what is it to you, you highbinder?" he demanded. "Don't you make a rake-off on it, too?"

"Sure," admitted the assayer, "but you better go slow or the company will catch on and throw a few of you into the *juzgado*."

"*Juzgado?*" exclaimed McWillie indignantly. "Not much—no prison bars for me—not while Tom Langley is sheriff! No, sir, I helped elect him!" Then, forgetting for a moment his culpability, he took it upon himself to correct the assayer and also to rebuke him. "My friend," he said, laying a serious hand upon his shoulder, "you insult me! I ain't no vest-pocket high grader—I'm a *man!* Now listen—I'll tell you—honest now—*I've got a good thing!*" He tapped his chest impressively and pocketed his money without counting the change.

"All right, pardner," answered the assayer, smiling indulgently; "only don't work it too hard."

IF there ever was a mine calculated by nature to make everybody happy from the stockholders to the miners, it was the Silver King. When a mine turns out native silver in hunks there ought to be enough to go round within reason, and the superintendent who is overlord on such a bonanza is not likely to telephone forty miles for the sheriff every time he finds a miner who is "making a collection" of silver ores. It is only when some one plays the hog, like Bud McWillie, that the official resentment is likely to take a practical turn—and when Bill Connors sent word by a Mexican boy that he had been robbed again, Dudfield, the big superintendent of the Silver King, became wroth.

Four times within a year the stage had been held up at Robbers' Roost. In his first pique, Dudfield remarked that he would have to tuck a little powder under that point of rocks pretty soon and blow it into the creek. Then with a weary smile he told the local deputy to "go after him" and shut himself up in his office to meditate. These mountain deputies, appointed by a sheriff who was elected by the miners, were about as keen after holdups as they were after high graders—nevertheless, the treasure had to go out and some one had to protect it. After the first holdup, Dudfield thought he had done his duty by the stockholders when he hired Barney Schell for a shotgun messenger. Barney was a proper bad man and he understood that he was hired to shoot. And so did the holdups—that was the pity of it. They potted him from ambush before he could fire a shot, dropped a leader to stop the stage and looted the treasure box regardless.

It was then that Bill Connors and his horses became gun-shy and the messenger job went begging. As for the sheriff, the coroner beat him to the corpse by twenty-four hours and the pursuit was over before the inquest. The fact that the robbers got drunk down in Tucson and gave themselves away did not alter the case at home—the sheriff, Tom Langley, was against him, Dudfield. As an individual, Dudfield cast one vote for sheriff, whereas the men who were robbing him of high-grade ore alone cast several hundred. Furthermore, the Silver King paid no

taxes on its treasure, but shipped it out of the country, much to the detriment and prejudice of Arizona in general and of Pinal County in particular—hence whatever was done in its defense would have to be done by the company.

That the superintendent of a big mine should allow his treasure to be robbed four times within a year might argue with some people a certain incapacity. The ordinary mining superintendent is supposed to be, and often is, a promoted bookkeeper from the East, who smokes two-bit cigars in the front office, never goes underground and knocks down ten per cent, coming and going. But H. H. Dudfield was no such man. He was a Western product and drew a larger salary than the governor of the territory for his ability to hold things together and keep the peace. But when a man has a miners' union and a board of directors on his hands, a thousand men on his pay roll, freight wagons running ninety miles across the desert and three shifts working in the mine and mill, it takes about four holdups to rivet his attention upon the matter.

Being now thoroughly aroused, Dudfield went out and took a look at the box and it was while he was studying Money-getter's handiwork with the cold chisel that he came upon his efforts with the pen—or rather, with the blunt end of a .45 bullet.

"Well, well," he remarked, "this fellow had time to throw off a little poetry before he skipped out, eh?

"Don't crowd me, boys,
I won't be took alive.

Um! That's pretty good. We'll have to send that in to the *Arizona Examiner*." He drew out his notebook and copied it carefully, while the crowd gaped, and soon the word went round that the new holdup was a poet and the boss was going to put his poem in the paper.

Meanwhile, Dudfield dropped in at the blacksmith shop and ordered a new box.

"Don't be stingy about it, Jake," he said. "Make it big—say three feet long by two feet wide, inside. And say," he added, "put some iron on it. Your last box was chopped open with a cold chisel by one of our local poets." And as the laugh passed over this new idea of the boss—as if it would do any good to make the box big—he smiled wisely.

There were several people in Pinal who, under the influence of liquor, claimed that they could read old Dudfield like a book, but most men agreed that he was too much for them. The poem appeared in the *Examiner* and everybody read it, with a whole column about the poet highwayman of Pinal; but it took Bud McWillie himself to solve the mystery of that strong box.

IT was in the Lone Star Saloon—where he was making a nuisance of himself on the strength of the money he had spent—that Bud McWillie, groggily thumbing over an old paper, first saw his poem in print and he let out such a yell that several men forgot themselves and looked at him. Glorying in his sudden fame, Bud took instant advantage of this indiscretion—but they faded away before him. Then with drunken insistence he endeavored to get the barkeeper to read his poem, but not even that accommodating individual would listen to him; so at last he crowded the *Examiner* into his pocket and went surging out into the street to seek appreciation.

But in a busy town like Globe—where a dollar could lie in the sawdust for half a day before anybody had time to pick it up—it is surprising how little attention a drunken man can command after his money is gone. Before he could force his claims to authorship upon anybody, Bud sobered up to the point where he suddenly realized that

he was trying to give himself away. It is an honor to be a poet in any land, but no one likes to get thrown into jail for his first attempt. So with his tongue between his teeth, Money-getter, the poet, saddled up his horses at the feed corral and drifted quietly out of town.

ONE week later Bud McWillie, the cowman, brought some wild cattle down the cañon and sold them to the butcher at Pinal. Things were lively in that little town, spread out along the banks of Queen Creek. The jagged face of nature was obscured in spots by bottles, champagne flowed until it spilled, and the night rang with music and laughter; but contrary to his custom Bud drank only in moderation, lingering about the saloons to see what men had to say of Money-getter.

Here and there his heart was made glad by hearing the name mentioned jocularly; but it was in the big casino where men jostled each other at the bar that Bud McWillie first realized what a hold his poem had taken upon the popular fancy. In the midst of a general treat some little man who was getting squeezed in the press suddenly piped out:

> "Don't crowd me, boys,
> I won't be took alive."

And the roar of laughter that followed shook the glasses. Overwhelmed by the spontaneity of that guffaw, Bud smiled dizzily and turned away; but even after he had returned to camp a self-conscious grin still lurked around the corners of his mouth and he began to write new poems on the cover of his grub box in anticipation of his next attempt.

The burden of several of these verses flitted automatically through his subconscious mind when, after mature preparation, he again dropped in behind his especial boulder on Robbers' Roost and waited impatiently for the stage. He was deep in his musings when the rumble of wheels broke in upon him, and when he yelled: "Hands up!" at Bill Connors his voice was a little lacking in the harsh malevolence of his craft. Nevertheless Connors pulled up in a hurry.

"Throw off your box!" commanded McWillie, squinting shrewdly along his sights, but Connors only raised his hands higher.

"It's pretty heavy," he said apologetically, "I——"

"Now here," broke in McWillie, "don't give me any back talk. Just throw off that treasure and be quick about it."

"All right," replied the stage driver, wrapping his lines around the brake, "I'll do my best—but it's powerful heavy."

He dropped stiffly down and was starting toward the rear, when McWillie halted him abruptly.

"What kind of game is this?" he demanded. "Where you goin' to?"

"Back to the boot," answered Connors peevishly. "Didn't you say to throw off the box? Well, then!" And still grumbling he went around behind. Throwing loose the lashings he cast the flap back and laid hold upon the new box, boosting it as if to try his strength. Then, bracing his foot against the deck of the boot, he surged back and the huge chest moved about an inch.

"Hell's fire!" exclaimed McWillie. "Is that all treasure?"

"That's what!" responded Connors. "They only send it down every other day now."

"Well, yank it off then," cried Bud, overjoyed at his luck, "and let me get at it! Holy Moses, what a haul!" In his excitement he entirely fogot the etiquette of his profession, which runs to sharp commands and surly answers, and when the big box tipped off and fell with a bang he squealed like a

schoolgirl. Then, recovering himself, he bent his gun upon the panting stage driver and said gruffly:

"Now you chase yourself, you old skate—and don't try any funny business down the road, or I'll blow the top of your head off!"

Being thus duly warned and insulted, Bill Connors drove grouchily away and McWillie leaped upon his treasure. With all his strength he could barely raise one end of it and his eyes glittered as he tested the lock. The box weighed two hundred pounds if it weighed an ounce—and the bulk of it was solid silver. Bud doubted if the little pack mule that he had brought this time could carry it all. However, the box had to be broken first—but if old Dudfield thought a job of blacksmithing could stand between Money-getter and his stake, he was away off.

RUNNING to his pack, McWiliie jerked out chisel and hammer and grabbed up a long-handled driller's sledge that he had stolen from a deserted shaft on the way down from Queen Creek. Swinging this handy tool above his head, he brought it down upon the lock, and for ten minutes he struck as steadily as if he was practicing for a drilling contest against the renowned Silver King hard rocks, but even then the blacksmithing of old Jake held sturdily.

"I'll fix you yet," said Money-getter, talking through his teeth. He picked up his cold chisel and hammer and began to cut a circle around the lock and, as it fell away, the full white gleam of the silver shone out through the ragged hole.

"Aha!" chuckled Money-getter, grinning to the ears. "Here's where I make a winning!" He seized the cover, wrenched it from its moorings and grabbed for the treasure, but it held fast.

"What the hell!" he faltered, tearing aside the canvas, and a weak flow of profanity showed that he was hard hit. The box was full of silver—but it was all in one ingot.

This was the dirty Irish trick that old Dudfield had hatched up to euchre him out of his treasure! Hissing with anger, Money-getter laid hold upon the broken chest and dumped the tremendous gleaming ingot upon the ground. And what an ingot—his eyes bulged out as he looked at it—nowhere upon it was there a crack or a blemish—it was two full days' milling, cast into a solid bar. Maybe it weighed two hundred pounds, maybe more—a royal treasure, fit to give to a king, but never to be packed on a mule.

Money-getter saw that from the start. Nevertheless, with the bullheaded pertinacity of a man who is beaten, but will not own it, he brought up his pack mule and tried to burden him with the treasure.

"Whoa, Jack!" he said, standing on the slack of the rope, and then, with an Herculean effort, he bucked the huge bar up and dropped it across the pack boxes.

The mule staggered, grunting and shifting his feet; then, seeing that his master really expected him to carry that weight upon the apex of his back bone, he threw a sudden snaky twist into his spine and tipped it over on the far side.

"Hyar—stan' up—— Whoa, pet!" yelled Money-getter, struggling to hold it in place.

When the bar hit the ground, he slapped the mule over the ears for his stubbornness. Then he leaned heavily over the animal's back and studied on how he could get away with that ingot—because he was certainly going to do it.

There was only one way to pack the thing, and that was to cut it in two. With the halves nicely balanced in his pack boxes, the two hundred pounds

would ride easily enough—but it would be a job to cut it! Leaping astride the ingot, he drew a line across the middle and went to work at it with his chisels, glancing up the road occasionally as he tapped away with his hammer. It was a desolate road dragging along over dry washes and ridges for thirty miles without passing a single house—but Pinal was only two miles up the line and the freight wagons would be along pretty soon. And—well, it would take a man a year to cut that ingot in two with a chisel. Money-getter threw down his tools and gazed at the treasure moodily. The joke was on him, that was all.

Picking up his chisel he began to trace idle, introspective lines upon the smooth surface of the ingot. He had intended to write a poem for this occasion that would set the boys to laughing—something funny—but he had got left all around. Still—well, the boys would be looking for something, anynow—why not be a sport? His pale-blue eyes became fixed, he swallowed his Adam's apple contemplatively and the old self-conscious smile crept back.

"Well, here goes!" he said, and with a bold flourish he scratched this poem across one end of the ingot:

> Take back your bar,
> It's too dam' big fur me.
> My back is brok' from wurkin',
> And I'll haf to leav' it be.

Turning his head to one side, Money-getter read it over and laughed; but before he signed his name he stopped and considered. From reading that, some folks might think he had weakened and chase him up. Here was a chance for one of those hot-stuff poems that he had written on the cover of the grub box—they'd put that in the paper sure. He spat and began again:

> Stand back! I ain't afrade
> Ov enny man alive.
> You'l know me when you see me,
> I'm Money-gitter Number .45.

"Thar," said Money-getter, rising to his feet, "I guess that'll hold you for a while." And with a gay swagger he rode away.

TO those who use the foot rule of form in measuring the works of a poet, the humble quatrains of Money-getter may seem lame indeed. But Pinal thought they were fine. The freighter who found the ingot in the road stopped to read the verses before he rode back with the news; the deputy sheriff and his posse took a smoke and laughed over them before they went after Money-getter; and Dudfield swore that that one about "Take back your bar" was the funniest thing he had seen in a year.

"The *Examiner* will run that, all right," he said, and, while he was writing it down, a hundred men clamored outside the office for a copy of the paper.

Dudfield ordered five hundred copies, with fifty extras for himself, sent up by the first mail, and the whole town settled restlessly down to wait. There was only one man in camp who did not fall in with the spirit of the times—that was Lum Martin, the ranger. Having been called to those parts to investigate a little case of cattle stealing, he was stopping at Pinal. When, the day after the holdup, he heard of the outlaw poet, he was scandalized.

Of the four-and-twenty rangers who served the Territory of Arizona there were all kinds, short and tall—but Lum Martin was the "roughest" of them all. If he had been born a calf, he would certainly have been killed for beef on the first rodeo. Seen from the rear, which was his pleasanter aspect, with his curved back and skinny neck and his head bulging big behind the ears, he looked like a shriveled desert turtle, walking on its hind legs.

If he had ever laughed since they had tickled him in the cradle, that smile

had never brightened sinful Pinal. His mind was full of sanguinary thoughts directed against the enemies of the Cattlemen's Association and the Federal government and his choler went out against Money-getter also, although he as yet had only robbed a mining company. However, you can never tell what one of these holdups will do next and, on one pretext or another, Martin lingered gloomily about the town, neither talking nor drinking. But when the *Arizona Examiner* came out with its florid account of the "Outlaw Bard of Silver King," he snorted.

"You all just wait till *I* get after Mr. Money-getter for something," he said, gnashing his teeth under pretext of chewing tobacco. "I'll poet him with a .30-.30!"

The natives, however, were too busy reading the editorial appreciation of Money-getter's poem, which began: "Without claiming to be a final authority upon the tuneful outflow of the Pierian spring," and ended: "The untimely death of this frontier troubadour at the hands of the peace officers would certainly inflict an irreparable loss upon Arizona letters."

MEANWHILE, high up in the mountains back of Silver King, Bud McWillie, author of "Don't crowd me, boys," and "Take back your bar," was sitting in the silence of the desolate peaks, watching the Mammoth Trail. For three days he had ridden over the roughest country he could find, without knowing whether he was leading a desperate chase or simply wearing out his horses' feet. The sense of something impending in the outer world weighed upon him heavily, as he waited, and he wondered dimly whether the *Examiner* had published his poems. He would like to have fixed that last one over a little—just touch it up, you know—but it was not so bad, either. And this was the day when the papers were due.

It might be that the Mexican kid that carried the Mammoth mail would have an *Examiner* in his pocket, and he could get to look at it. So, in mingled hope and fear, Bud McWillie waited for the mail to come by; and, as the Mexican with his pot-bellied horse and flapping pouches came toiling up the trail, Bud's heart began to pound against his ribs. Then, without any fixed intentions, he fumbled for his handkerchief and tied it across his nose, just below the eyes, pulling his hat down low—and when the mail carrier came opposite, he rose up and covered him with money-getter number .45.

"Hands up!" he said, in a matter-of-fact way.

But the Mexican boy, far from being reassured, yelped with fright, while his horse shied over to the ragged edge of the trail.

"Have you got an *Examiner* about you?" demanded McWillie.

But the simple-minded *paisano* did not understand. Money-getter had scared all the English out of him.

"No intiendo," he murmured.

"Tienes uste un Arizona Examiner?" roared McWillie.

"No intiendo," Juan muttered blankly, and Money-getter's impatience overcame him.

"Oh, hell!" he grumbled. "You don't savvy nothin'!" He strode down the hill and felt of the Mexican's pockets, but there was no paper in them. "What ye got in *them?"* he demanded, feeling of the mail pouches.

"U. S. mail!" answered the boy, with the dignity of a government official.

"Well, don't try to put on any dog over me," blustered McWillie, "and why they picked *you* out to carry the mail is sure a problem. Now, Mr. Greaser, I'll trouble you to open one of them bags and give me an *Arizona Examiner.* That ain't asking much, but I'll have to shoot you full of holes if you don't do it!"

The Mexican shrugged his shoulders. "No can," he said. "Have no key."

"No?" retorted Money-getter sarcastically. "Well, then, I guess I'll have to spoil your bag for you." He drew out his knife and slashed a hole in the nearest pouch. "That's what I was after!" he said, fishing out an *Examiner*. "Now chase yourself, hombre, and keep the change!" He sat down upon a rock and tore open the paper.

"Daring Holdup!" he read. "The Outlaw Poet of Pinal Engraves Verses on Silver Ingot!" And from that moment Bud McWillie became oblivious of the lesser things in life. He was roused at last by the clatter of hoofs down the cañon and, looking up, he saw the Mexican boy, half a mile away, galloping heavily back toward Pinal.

"Well, durn my hide!" he exclaimed. "If I didn't let that greaser git away from me! W'y, the little devil, I believe he's going after that ranger!"

Pinal, indeed, was the Mexican's destination and, five minutes after his arrival, Lum Martin rode down the main street furiously, his carbine tucked carefully away under his left knee.

"I'll poet him," he remarked sardonically, as he passed the crowd by the store, and a sudden gloom fell upon the whole company. Never before had Pinal produced such an *improvisatore;* and now, just as he was beginning to make the camp famous, Lum Martin was out to kill him. And for what—why, for taking a copy of his own poems!

"It's a dirty shame!" declared Jimmy Boyle, who kept the Casino. "Boys, ain't there something we can do about this?"

"Let us rope that damn Mexican," suggested a gentleman in spurs, "and learn him to keep his mouth shut."

"Naw, I mean about this here Money-getter!" interposed Boyle. "Somebody ought to ride out and keep him from being killed!"

"I'll tell you what, fellers!" yelled McFarland, the deputy sheriff, who saw his chance to balk a rival officer, "let's go out and arrest this Money-getter for robbing the *stage!* Who'll go with me now? I'll swear in the whole town!"

Half an hour later thirty armed men rode up to the Casino for a last drink on the house and, as they scampered off up the Mammoth Trail, H. H. Dudfield smiled upon them benevolently from the company store.

"Go it, boys," he said, "the drinks are on me if you save him."

UPON a far height where the western ridge rises tortuously from the Mammoth Trail, Bud McWillie halted his weary horses and looked back to see if he was pursued. It was only by inadvertence that he had thus laid himself open to a Federal charge—any one but a Mexican would have understood his feelings and presented him with an *Examiner*—but if Lum Martin wanted to get technical and call it robbing the mail, he would give him a run for his money.

At the same time he would like to know all about it before he dipped down into the Superstition country and lost his outlook. So, throwing his animals loose, Money-getter sat on the rim of the great divide, looking down into the cañon, and, while he was waiting, he drew out his copy of the *Examiner* and looked at his poems again. Then, all being quiet, he turned to the editorial appreciation and read it over to himself, trying to get the drift of it.

"'Peery-an Springs!'" he muttered. "Never heard of it—sounds kind of familiar, too. What's this, now? 'We venture the assertion that the divine afflatus of poesy is not confined to the pie belt of the effete East.' Ain't that a teaser, though? Aha! 'In Money-getter of Pinal, Arizona has a poet whose name will go down the ages

coupled with Tupper and Villon.' That's me, all right; but who the hell is Tupper?" Here, then, was the crux of the whole critique and, being absolutely befogged by the allusion, McWillie sat humped up over the *Examiner* like a turkey on the roof of a cowbarn.

From the context he could gather that Tupper was a good man in his day, maybe—a thud against the hillside made him look up suddenly, but horses will fight flies, you know. He was just turning back to his problem when a .30-.30 bullet smashed against the rock below him, spattering to fragments and sending up a little cloud of smoke. Then from the deep cañon the muffled *pop* of a carbine came to his ears, and Money-getter jumped.

From behind the shelter of his rock, Money-getter looked over the Superstition country, wild-eyed—then, peering over the ridge, he saw Lum Martin, far below, urging his horse up the mountain and down the cañon, spurring up the Mammoth Trail, a perfect rout of horsemen, riding like the wind! That was enough. Money-getter did not know how it had all happened or what it was all about, but he knew that they were after *him*. Leaping upon his horse he plunged down the mountain like an outlaw bull that hears the thunder of pursuit. Carried along by the rush, his pack animal followed for a while, trying to keep up with its mate; but at the foot of the mountain it stopped, outdistanced, and looked back.

Over the top of the hill there came a ruck of men, pouring down into the Superstition country. First of all, Lum Martin gained the summit, his horse blowing as if it was wind-broken. From the high ridge he scanned the chaos of buttes and cañons like a familiar book, looking for the dust of Money-getter; but when he saw the pack mule he rode for it recklessly and McFarland and his posse came stringing along after him for a mile.

Intent upon the trail, the ranger passed the mule without stopping to look for marks or brands; but the posse was more light-minded. It was a long time between drinks on that trail, anyway, and as the deputies came up, one after another, the pursuit of Money-getter resolved itself into a caucus on the mule. Judging from brands and vents it had belonged to several people, but in a murmur that grew into a roar the awful truth came out—it was Bud McWillie's! Why, every man of them had seen it in Pinal the week before! And so Bud had turned holdup—and poet!

"Well!" growled a cowman, who had lost cattle. "If it's *that* cow thief, he can go to hell for all of me—I hope the ranger gits him!"

But the Pinal crowd swung the other way. Let Martin kill him? Not much! Bud was a good fellow—good-hearted, anyway; a little wild, maybe, but then—he was a poet! The only trouble was he was traveling too fast.

"I'll tell you, boys," said McFarland, who had learned a few things about volunteer posses, "let's call it off for right now. Martin has got a big lead on us, and *he* can't catch Bud, anyhow. A drink and a good square all round is what we need—and to-morrow we'll all go up Queen Creek. That's Bud's old stamping ground—he knows them trails like a rabbit—and ten to one he'll double on Martin and come in on us!" So it was all agreed, and that night the hardy rescuers lined up at the Casino bar to fortify themselves for the morrow.

But for Money-getter, the poet, there was no square meal with subsequent drinks on the house. Knowing who was after him, he rode recklessly, without trying to cover his trail. It was rough on the horse, but there would be lots of horses left when he, Money-getter,

was dead; and he just naturally had to keep ahead of Lum Martin. His pony was pounding heavily before the sun went down, and McWillie decided to jockey Mr. Martin a little before his horse gave out altogether. So as soon as it was dark he turned off on a cattle trail he knew and headed for Sand Creek. There was generally a bunch of Lazy V punchers camped by the upper water, and he might pick up another horse. It has never been considered quite as safe as life insurance to steal horses from cowboys; but it was that or fight Lum Martin, and Bud still remembered that .30-.30.

NOW, as luck would have it, as Money-getter came walking down the cañon about midnight, leading his horse, he came across one of the Lazy V horses, a nice nimble buckskin, close-hobbled. It was the boss cutting pony of the outfit, and the special pet of Jimmy James of Texas; but to McWillie it was simply *a* horse. His saddle and bridle went on and the hobbles came off and, when Jimmy James went up the cañon in the morning for his horse, there was nothing to show for it but a broken-down pony and some boot tracks in the sand.

The Lazy V's were just saddling up to find out about this when Lum Martin rode in on them and, when he saw the stray pony, he ground his teeth. There was a little matter of cattle stealing against Bud McWillie, and this was Bud's horse. Three minutes later the entire outfit was on the trail—all except Elleck Brown; he stayed in camp and let Jimmy James ride his horse, because Jimmy wanted to cut the heart out of Bud McWillie.

"God help *him*," said Jimmy, "if I git close enough to shoot!"

And Lum Martin looked a little meaner than ever. There was nothing light or frolicsome, then, about their pursuit, and after they had picked up his trail the six men rode hard. True to the instinct that swings the wild fox in a circle before the hounds, Bud had doubled and turned back toward Queen Creek. When they saw surely that he was heading for home the Lazy V's took a chance and rode by landmarks, picking up the trail at every pass, and, as they drew in upon the upper waters of Queen Creek, the tracks were not half an hour old.

"I bet you we jump him at his old camp," said Martin, as they bunched up behind the last divide; and the punchers grunted approval.

Whether he came out shooting or running was immaterial to them—all they wanted was to get at him quick. As they whirled down the cañon, the pursuit turned into a race. The first man in won, but courtesy permitted Martin and Jimmy James to lead.

Gaunt and famished, Money-getter had just cut a can of tomatoes and was drinking greedily through the slashings when the drumming of hoofs came in on him from up the cañon.

"God A'mighty!" he gasped, and dropped everything to run.

The boss cutting pony of the Lazy V stood outside the cave, mouthing the water at the drinking place, and Money-getter mounted him like a cyclone. Then in a whirlwind of sand he went flying down the cañon; but whenever his horse struck a soft place he could hear the rumble of hoofs behind him.

For three miles the cañon stretched before him like a ragged gash in the face of nature, boxed in by overhanging walls, and a rabbit could not find a place to hide in the waste of its water-washed bed. It was a straight race, then, for the mouth of the ravine—once out he could take to the hills on foot. With his old hat flapping in the wind, Bud McWillie spurred and lashed his lagging pony, taking the turns like a madman, while the fear of death clutched at his heart.

Meanwhile, in bunches of fours and fives, the friends of Money-getter, the poet, came stringing along up the lower cañon to rescue him from Lum Martin. They had had a drink or two apiece all around and were hollering and laughing in the best of spirits when McFarland, who was in the lead, reined in his horse abruptly.

"Listen, fellers!" he said, holding up his hand. "I hear a horse coming! Shut up back there, can't you! Now —hear that?"

A hollow rumbling echoed from up the cañon, then it changed to a roar and the scrabble of feet over rocks.

"Jerusalem!" yelled McFarland, jumping his horse out of the trail. "He's right on top of us! Give 'im the road, boys!"

THERE was a momentary scramble, a scattering of the leaders and then in a shower of stones Bud McWillie whirled around the corner and plunged into their midst. There was a yell, a thud of horses meeting, a tangle of horsemen overthrown and McWillie shot out over their heads like a flying squirrel. Piled up in the sand, he lay on his neck for an instant, dazed; McFarland, ever ready, rushed in and grappled with him.

"You are my prisoner!" he thundered, hauling him to his feet, and, reaching down, he snatched money-getter from its holster and tucked it into the slack of his belt.

With the fear of Lum Martin still upon him, McWillie came to, scared senseless.

"Don't hurt me, boys," he stuttered, holding up his hands. "I—I don't know where I'm at!"

"Well, listen to that, will ye!" said McFarland, grinning triumphantly. "It's Money-getter, all right!"

His posse burst into a roar of laughter. Here was a joke that would last as long as the drink habit—Money-getter talking poetry in his sleep—bucked off his horse and come to spouting poetry—wow! Everybody laughed, even the fellows whose horses were down—but Money-getter stared at them dumfounded. Then from up the cañon there came another rumble and rush of feet.

"Out of the way, for God's sake!" yelled McFarland.

As the posse scrambled back among the rocks, Lum Martin came tearing around the corner and dashed through the narrow lane as if he was finishing a horse race. His little eyes were pinched down to a slit, his teeth were skinned, and, when he saw Money-getter in the crowd, he brought his pony up on its hind legs and whirled upon him with his gun.

"What's the meaning of this?" he shouted, as McFarland waved him back.

But the chaotic arrival of Jimmy James and the Lazy V's sent everybody dodging and not a word could be heard. McFarland threw back his vest and showed a large star pinned to his shirt; McWillie stepped cautiously behind him. The rest was uproar and profanity.

"What you holding that man for?" demanded Martin, as soon as the rush was over, advancing threateningly upon his rival.

"Robbing the Pinal stage," said McFarland, licking his lips nervously. "Why? What ye goin' to do about it, huh?"

"Robbing the *stage!*" shrieked Martin. Hurling his revolver to the ground he cursed everything damnable, being thoughtful enough, however, not to get personal. But when he choked for breath the real trouble began.

Jimmy James walked in on Bud McWillie and began to talk. It was all kind of low and quiet, but it expressed what a man thinks when his pet horse has been stolen and "busted" over the

rocks, and the men who happened to be standing behind McWillie backed off quick.

"Now, Mr. Officer," said Jimmy James, stepping back a little, "you jest give that man his gun an' turn him loose. I don't shoot any one in cold blood, but it's *him* or *me*."

There was a deathlike silence for a moment, and all eyes turned to Money-getter. But there the author of "Don't crowd me, boys," weakened.

"For God's sake, boys," he cried, and his voice broke in the middle, "somebody stop him! I—I can't fight—I'm scairt!"

There was a murmur among the crowd, and Lum Martin grinned scornfully; but McFarland still stood before his prisoner.

"Sorry I can't accommodate you, pardner," he said to James, "but the law don't permit it."

With his hand on his gun, Jimmy James of the Lazy V stood scowling for a minute, then he glanced at the crowd significantly and smiled.

"Oh, that's all right, brother," he said, bowing politely; "don't mention it—quite right, I'm sure. I thought you had a *man*."

So in the crucible of life Money-getter, the poet, was tried and found wanting. No one could figure it out exactly, either; he had the name for being quite a scrapper. But when they brought McWillie down to Pinal, old Dudfield explained it all in a minute. It was the artistic temperament that got away with him.

A complete book, "Bright Blue," by Robert H. Rohde, will be published in the next issue of THE POPULAR.

THE QUICK RETORT

WHEN Harry Maynard, now a prosperous business man of the Southwest, was a member of Congress from Virginia, he was famous as the legislator who would run his legs off for his constituents. The result was that people from his district went in hordes to Washington to ask him to land them in government jobs.

One morning, when his usually nerve-proof patience had been exhausted, a chronic loafer from Norfolk appeared in his office and demanded a place on the public pay roll.

"Not on your life!" snapped Maynard. "You're not competent to fill any job in Washington. You don't get it, and there's no use chinning about it!"

The constituent, amazed and insulted by this unexpected outburst from the long-suffering Harry, flushed a brick-red and turned toward the door. But Maynard's good nature reasserted itself at sight of the man's discomfiture. He was suddenly anxious to make peace with the voter.

"Wait a minute!" he called out in a placating tone, trying to think of something nice to say. "Er—aw—have you," he began, and reached for a pamphlet on his desk. "Have you read my last speech?"

With his hand on the knob, the job seeker paused long enough to answer: "I hope I have!"

The Big League

By W. O. McGeehan

Author of "The Half-per-cent Handicap," "The Championess," Etc.

The "Buster" had come to think of himself—and few would disagree with him—as a very great ball player, but that, of course, was before he had played against the All-Celestial Nine and had faced the smoke balls that old Jupiter thundered at him from the pitcher's box.

THE celebrated "Buster" was sick unto death. In the street outside the hospital, a crowd composed for the most part of small boys waited for the latest bulletin from the bedside. Part of this crowd was made up of a sand-lot baseball team. There were traces of tears on the grimy cheeks of the youngest athlete.

"Oh-h-h!" he sobbed. "Supposing the Buster was to die."

Gloom settled on the little group.

The Buster, who had arrived on a stretcher accompanied by a corps of newspaper reporters in taxicabs, had reached the hospital delirious and in convulsions. They gave him hypodermic injections to quiet him and he now lay in a private room, to all appearances dead.

The convulsions had followed some gastronomic feats for which the Buster was almost as well known as he was for his hitting. The Mastodons had stopped on their way North from the Florida training camp to play an exhibition game in a North Carolina town.

The hotel luncheon had been inadequate for the Buster. On arriving at the baseball park, he augmented it by sixteen frankfurters on rolls, ten ice-cream cones and had washed the same down with eight bottles of ginger ale and sarsaparilla. When the game was called, much to his astonishment, he felt a trifle sick. In the first inning he was doubled up with cramps and a local physician was summoned.

This authority, utterly lacking in reverence for the great national char-

acter who had become his patient, grunted:

"Well, it is not a case of undernourishment. Get him North and do not let him eat anything until his family doctor looks him over. They will give it a prettier name up North, but I should say that it was a plain case of bellyache."

They got a drawing-room for the Buster and sent him North with Joe Kelly, the trainer. The cramps abated and Buster craved nutriment. Joe Kelly protested feebly, but the Buster ordered a double steak and three portions of fried potatoes. The convulsions developed just as the train was pulling into the Pennsylvania Station. It was all very mysterious and not to be understood.

Only Colonel John Reisling, who had bought the Buster from a rival club for a quarter of a million dollars, was allowed to see him as he lay there, inert and apparently lifeless. As an investment the Buster at that moment did not look like much.

"What's the matter with the Buster, colonel?" demanded the youngest member of the juvenile baseball team, whose hero the Buster was.

The colonel laid his hand on his portly abdomen, looked sorrowful and shook his head.

"Aw-w-w!" said the sympathetic little athlete. "A bellyache. That hurts like sixty. Aw, fellers, Buster's got a most terrible bellyache!" The tears flowed freely down the grimy face and all of the members of the little baseball club held their hands to their abdomens as a gesture of sympathy and understanding.

The Buster lay still on the bed, with only the vigilant nurse in the room. His thick curls were rumpled and damp and his swarthy face was a greenish hue. His mouth was closed and he was breathing just faintly through his tip-tilted nose.

AS he lay there, the spectral scout, invisible to the nurse, stole into the room and tapped the Buster on one of the broad shoulders. The nurse was watching the figure on the bed, but the Buster was speeding through the ether with the spectral scout.

"Where are we going?" Buster asked the scout.

"You are going to the Big League for a try-out," replied the scout.

"What do you mean 'Big League?'" demanded the Buster. "I'm 'Buster' Rooney of the Mastodons, leading the league in batting and got the record for home runs. Don't you read the sporting news?"

"You have not been in the Big League yet," said the scout.

The Buster began to feel alarmed. Clouds rushed by them and the stars grew bigger and brighter every second.

"Maybe I'm dead," said the Buster to himself. "If I am, it is going to be pretty tough for those poor kids in the bleachers.

"Say," he began, aloud, "where do these awfully big-league clubs of yours hang out?"

"The Elysian Fields," replied the scout shortly. "Don't ask too many questions. Bushers are not supposed to ask questions there."

The Buster was mute with indignation. This mysterious old man was calling him a busher, a recruit. Oh, well, when he got to wherever he was going, they would know that he was Buster Rooney and he would have the laugh on this silly old man. Even if they did not know him, they would see that he was a big leaguer the first time he was at bat. Of course, if he had to go against left-handed pitching, it might take a little longer.

At any rate there would be a rude awakening for this old gentleman. What kind of a scout was he, not to know of Buster Rooney's batting record? Oh, well, maybe he had died.

Something must have happened to him. Buster had no appetite at all.

They sped on through space in utter silence, till the pale dawn came, turned brighter and tinted the clouds below them rose color. They descended over the peak of a mountain.

"That is Olympus, busher," said the scout. "But I forgot. You haven't been anywhere and you haven't seen nothing. We will soon be there."

The Buster made no reply. He was still annoyed and more than a trifle anxious.

THEY descended lightly into the biggest, most beautiful ball park the Buster ever had seen. The stands dazzled him. It was built out of pure Parian marble. It seemed to have seats for millions, though the hour was early and there were comparatively few there.

"This way," said the scout gruffly. "I'll turn you over to the manager. Then I'll get back to the horseshoe-pitching tournament. I wish they would get another scout. I've brought in busher after busher, but there is no pleasing that manager."

This sounded ominous. The introduction was not at all reassuring. The manager was wearing a helmet of steel and was clad in a uniform that looked more like one of the sheet arrangements handed out in a Turkish bath than any costume the Buster had seen before.

"Here is the new busher," said the scout shortly. "He says he's good."

The man with the helmet rubbed his beard reflectively.

"Oh, all right! Sit on the bench and we'll see if we can do anything with you."

The Buster was about to tell the bearded man just who he was, but, after quailing under the fierce look in his eyes, decided that his cue was silence, at least until he could feel his way around. The dugout seemed to be practically deserted, most of the players being out in the field at practice.

A slight figure huddled in a corner looked up and shouted:

"Hello, busher! When did you get in?"

It was "Wee Willie" Keeler of the old Orioles, the greatest place hitter that ever lived.

"Hello, Willie!" said the Buster joyfully. "Where are we?"

"We're in the Big League," replied Keeler. "We're a couple of rookies, a couple of hunks of ivory from the sticks, getting our first look at fast company."

"I don't get the big idea," said the Buster. "I'm playing with the Mastodons at Charlotte, North Carolina. Then the old scout grabs me and brings me here. If Colonel Reisling sold me, he must have got some price. But the Mastodons will go to pieces without me."

"They don't buy them for the Big League," said Wee Willie Keeler. "They just draft them. I was drafted right out of a pinochle game."

The Buster remembered how Wee Willie Keeler had been called.

"Say, Willie," he demanded, in awe-struck tones, "are we all dead?"

"Don't ask foolish questions," said Keeler, annoyed. "All I know is that I have been sitting on this bench for three years, waiting for a chance, but the league is too fast for me."

"But you were the fastest man on the old Orioles!" said the Buster.

"The Orioles, yes," agreed Wee Willie Keeler. "They were a pretty fair minor-league club. But this is different. You see that little fellow over there with the feathers on his legs? Well, he is the right fielder. I have to stick on the bench until he slows up or gets a Charley horse, so it looks as though I will be just sitting for the rest of my days."

"Is he fast?" asked the Buster.

"Fast!" exclaimed Keeler. "Say, you could let him play the whole outfield and he would cover all three positions. Wait till you see him stealing. You'll say that 'Ty' Cobb has just been standing still all his life!"

"Where did they get him?" asked the Buster. "I never heard of any player with feathers on his legs."

"Oh, he's a home-town boy from around here," answered Keeler. "His nickname is Mercury and I'll tell the world he is! He certainly is a natural ball player if there ever was one."

"Who's the manager?" demanded the inquisitive Buster.

"Tough egg," replied Keeler. "Name is Ulysses. Foxy. Great strategy."

"Is it all right to take a walk around and look the place over?" asked the Buster.

"Sure!" answered Keeler. "The rules are pretty easy here. Only don't go making any cracks and don't try to butt in. They are pretty frosty to bushers in this place. So watch your step."

"I guess I know how to behave," said the Buster loftily. "I've been around a lot and in some pretty swell society, too. If I had my trunk with me, I'd dress up and give some of those dolls a treat. Say, did you see my act when I was in vaudeville?"

"Let's have a bottle of nectar," suggested Keeler, changing the subject abruptly. He called over a small boy in a bright toga. "Hey, Ganymede!" he said. "Two nectars, if they're cold."

The pop boy produced the flagons. The Buster tasted, then drank deeply.

"It beats the best beer they ever drew in St. Louis," he commented.

"I'll say it does!" said Wee Willie Keeler. "Have another?"

"Don't care if I do," said the Buster. "Got a kick, but there doesn't seem to be a headache in a barrel of it."

The Buster almost dropped the flagon. He was staring open-mouthed at a woman who was just entering her box. Her hair was raven black and her brow was circled by a golden band in the form of a serpent and there were two emeralds set in the head for the eyes. It seemed to the Buster that she smiled at him.

"Who's the dame?" he whispered. "Is she somebody in the pictures? I saw her somewhere."

Wee Willie Keeler drew him aside.

"Lay off that dame," he warned. "She's a trouble maker for fair. She's a snake charmer from Egypt. The name is Cleopatra, but the gang call her 'Poison Ivy' and I'll say that she is. She's a home wrecker and everything else. Wait till you meet a pal of mine, a nice old wop named Cæsar. He'll give you an earful about that dame."

Wee Willie Keeler seized the reluctant Buster by the arm and dragged him to another section of the grand stand. The Buster was grumbling.

"Hey, Willie!" he said. "I'm twenty-one and I've been up to the big time long enough not to get a badger hair cut."

"But I tell you that you're just a busher here!" said Keeler. "You never know when you are going to step into a fast one. Wait till I tell you what happened to John L. Sullivan."

"Is he here?" demanded the Buster.

"What's left of him," replied Wee Willie Keeler. "Sit down and I'll tell you about it.

"The old champion," he went on, "comes roaring into Bacchus' cabaret, where a lot of the boys and girls are sitting around watching a little entertainment. Spartacus has the gloves on with Hercules. They are just fooling around, of course, because the boys are really pals.

"John L. laps up a lot of the nectar and, not being used to it, the stuff goes to the old boy's head. Besides, he is a

little sore because nobody gave him a tumble when he first came to the place. It hurt the old boy's pride, he not being able to understand that a fighter is no novelty in this place.

"Pretty soon John L. steps up close to the ring and bellows: 'I can lick any blankety blank in the house.'

"As I said, there were a lot of the girls in the place, not that they don't hear a little strong language once in a while, when the boys get arguing over old times. But John L. is considered very much out of order. The two boys sparring go on about their business.

"John L. gets madder and madder. 'I can lick any blankety blank in the house,' he repeats. 'Yours truly, always on the level, John L. Sullivan.'

"With that, the boys that are sparring sort of look at him sideways.

"'That goes for those two big bums in the ring,' says John L.

"The bout stops and Hercules says to him:

"'Have you got any reputation?'

"That stopped John L. for a minute. I thought he was going to choke.

"'Reputation?' he says, dazed. 'Me? Hell! I'm John L. Sullivan.'

"With that, Hercules shouts over to a wizened old fellow who was sitting in a corner with his pot of nectar in front of him. It was a fellow named Figg, who was champion of England a hundred years or so ago.

"'Come on, Tom,' says Hercules. 'See if this fellow has anything.'

"John L. steps into the ring and strips to the waist. They put the gloves on him.

"'London prize-ring rules,' says Figg. 'I jolly well can't get used to this new stuff.'

"John L. scowls at him, but Figg is laughing.

"'Draw me another nectar,' says Figg, to one of the boys. 'I'll be back to the table in a minute.'

"With that, John L. rushed for him, but Figg side-stepped and hooked over a right to the chin. When John L. came to, he was very bitter about the championship going to an Englishman, but the first words he said were:

"'I have no excuses. I was beaten by an elder and a better man. Age must be served!' And there never was a truer word said. Come on away from here!"

BUT the Buster was rooted to the spot. Wee Willie glanced once in the direction in which the Buster was looking.

"Come on!" insisted Keeler. "And come fast! That's Helen of Troy."

"Sure!" said the Buster. "I must have met her. We played a couple of exhibition games at Troy. Johnny Evers comes from there."

"That wasn't the Troy, and this isn't the doll," declared Keeler. "That one started a free-for-all that lasted for seven years, and a lot of the boys are still sore about it. Come on! Beat it while you have your health."

The Buster jerked his arm away.

"I guess that I can take care of myself, and I guess I know a lady when I see one. I think she recognizes me, and I'm going down to have a little chat with her. If the manager wants me to pinch hit for somebody, he can send for me."

Wee Willie Keeler shook his gray head sorrowfully and departed in the direction of the Greek's dugout. The Buster, expanding his chest, walked gravely down to a field box occupied by a young woman with red-gold hair and the bluest pair of eyes the Buster had ever seen anywhere, not excluding the "Follies."

She was dressed in a trailing white robe with a purple hem, and her hair was bound with silver cord. She smiled at him

"'Scuse me," began the Buster. "But ain't we met somewhere before?"

"I am not quite sure," she replied, not at all angry.

"Sure!" said the Buster. "I'm Buster Rooney of the New Yorks. You know about me, if you're a fan. I made fifty-nine homers last year and I would have made more, but the pitchers were afraid of me and they walked me all the time. You're from Troy, ain't you?"

"Greece and Troy both," she answered, apparently amused.

"You must be in the theatrical racket," said the Buster. "I always go on tour after the season and I've been to Hollywood. Maybe you saw my picture. 'Home Run' Rooney in 'A Wallop for Love.'"

"I don't think so," she said.

"Well, it doesn't matter," prattled the Buster. "Say, how about going somewhere after the game? Wish I had my car here and we could go around to a few of the cabarets and step out a little. How about it?"

"It would start a lot of talk," she said.

"I'll knock a few of those bimbos cold if they say a word!" declared the Buster.

"There was a lot of talk when I left my husband," she said. "He never understood me. He thought a girl ought to do nothing but sit around by a spinning wheel. So I ran away with a gentleman friend. But he didn't understand me either and his folks were not nice to me. And then all the fighting started and my husband brought me back to Greece. We haven't spoken since, and I assure you, Mr. Rooney, that I was innocent as a babe about the whole thing. It's terrible to be so misunderstood!"

There were tears in her blue eyes and her red-gold head was bowed.

"Call me 'Buster,' kid," said Buster Rooney. "I'll say you got a raw deal! We'll square this thing. You can go to Reno or some place and, when you're Mrs. Buster Rooney, these saps will begin to look up to you."

"This is terribly sudden, Mr. Rooney," said Helen of Troy.

"It's all right, kid," returned the Buster generously. "I'm for you. And I'll say that I wouldn't be ashamed to be seen anywhere with you, when you get some new scenery. That outfit you're wearing ain't quite up to date, to my way of thinking, and you got to remember that when you become Mrs. Buster Rooney you got to look the part."

"It is wonderful to meet a man who really understands," said the lady.

"And wait till you see me in there at bat!" said the Buster. "You just watch me knock the cover off the ball."

The player pointed out by Wee Willie Keeler as Mercury vaulted into the stands without touching the rail and came swiftly up to the box where the Buster was sitting.

"Say, busher," he said, "the boss wants you to come and plant yourself on the bench!"

"Busher yourself!" retorted the Buster. "I'll be there in plenty of time, young feller."

"You'd better make it snappy," said Mercury.

"Is that so?" said the baffled Buster. "You see, kid, these guys don't know who I am yet. They are going to see something. Wait for me till after the game."

TAKING his time, the Buster went down to see the manager.

"Did you want me to start, Mr. Ulysses?"

The manager scowled.

"You plant yourself on that bench and sit there until you are told to unsit," returned Ulysses shortly. "This is a baseball game and not an afternoon tea. I might have made a ball player out of that Romeo Montague, but he would chase after the skirts."

"I ain't used to being talked to rough by managers," began the Buster.

"Well, you will be!" said Ulysses. "Bushers are supposed to speak only when spoken to, around here."

The Buster, still glowering, took a seat beside Wee Willie Keeler.

"What do you think of the big stiff?" he demanded. "Putting me on the bench and telling me to speak when I'm spoken to! I'll get him under the stands after the game and I'll get him good."

"Remember what happened to John L. Sullivan," cautioned Keeler. "I tell you this is the Big League."

The bell rang and the Greek team trotted out into position.

"That's Mars, in there pitching," explained Wee Willie Keeler. "The boss was going to start Achilles, but he has a sore heel and he can't do a thing when it gets that way. It's like the case of Rollie Zeider's bunion.

"Paris is up for the Trojans," went on Keeler, keeping up a running fire of comment as the game was played. "He isn't much. Told you so! He can hit them higher and nearer the plate every game. That's Hector, a fair hitter, but he never stands right at the plate. That was a close one. Two out.

"Watch this bird coming up now. He's a new one, a Swede, I think. His name is Thor. They say that he can hit them. Wow, I'll say he can! Now watch Mercury."

The Buster craned forward. Thor, a right-hander, had met the ball fairly and it was whizzing to the far outfield, which was bordered by a river. Suddenly Mercury made a leap and it seemed to the Buster that he jumped the height of the stands at the Polo Grounds. He made a wild stab at the ball, but only grazed it and the pellet fell with a splash into the river. It was a home run. Over on the Trojan side of the field, there was some wild cheering.

"If this guy Ulysses wants to win this game, he'll put me in there," said the Buster to Keeler, in a whisper. "I can crash that old apple harder than any right-hander."

"Easy!" cautioned Wee Willie Keeler. "Let well enough alone. All that I'm afraid of is that the boss might send me in and that I might not make good. This is fast company, Buster."

"It ain't too fast for me," said the stubborn Buster. "There ain't any company too fast for me, if I get anything like an even break."

The Greeks tied the game in the eighth. Mercury stole home.

"Did you see that bird fly along the paths?" demanded Wee Willie Keeler. "That was what I would call base stealing!"

"If you hit them hard enough, you don't have to steal bases," said the Buster loftily. "You can just trot around them. There isn't a batter in the league, outside of that Swede, Thor, and maybe that one of his was a fluke. I never heard of him breaking any home-run records. Wish I could get just one sock at that ball."

THE chance came suddenly. The Trojans took out their pitcher; a broad-shouldered man with long curly hair and a heavy black beard stepped into the box.

"Who is he?" demanded the Buster. "He looks like one of them House of David players to me."

"Oh, mommer!" cried Wee Willie Keeler. "That's Jove himself! 'Jupe,' the boys call him. Sometimes he pitches for one team and sometimes for another. If he's with the Trojans to-day —and he is—the game is in the bag."

"Hey, busher!" said Ulysses suddenly. "Get up there and see if you can hit."

"I'll murder that ball," whispered Keeler.

"You won't even see it," said Wee Willie Keeler. "There's smoke on it."

"I got four home runs off Walter Johnson last season," said the Buster.

Keeler looked at him pityingly.

"Keep away from the plate," he warned. "If his fast one just grazes you, it will be curtains."

The Buster picked up three bats and swung them easily. He dropped two of them as he stepped up to the plate and faced the bearded pitcher. He looked in the direction of right field. The Trojan right fielder had not moved back for him. It was evident that he did not know the Buster's reputation. The Buster looked toward a bend in the River Styx. He would not be content with knocking that ball into the river. He would knock it to the other side.

He was thinking of Helen of Troy in the field box. He was thinking, too, of what he would say to Ulysses, the manager, after he had crossed the plate and doffed his cap to the fans of the Elysian Fields. He could not think of just the right retort, but he felt that he would find it later. It would be too crude for him to say simply:

"Who's a busher now, you big busher?"

The bearded pitcher was winding up and the Buster took his stand at the plate. He blinked as the ball shot into the catcher's mitt. It seemed that he smelled a sulphurous odor and that a flash like lightning blinded him.

"Strike one," said the umpire, whose name was Socrates, and whose turn it was to work behind the plate, Plato being in the field.

The Buster said nothing at all. Again the bearded pitcher wound up and there was the odor of burning sulphur and the same blinding flash.

"Strike two," said the umpire.

The Buster tried strategy.

"Say!" he said to the umpire. "That one was a yard wide." He had not seen it any better than he had seen the first one.

"You'll get no hits with your bat on your shoulder," said Socrates dryly.

The Buster had been admonished to this effect before, in another league. He subsided quickly as he heard the Trojan catcher chuckle.

He made up his mind that he would not let a third one go by. As the pitcher brought his arm forward, the Buster shut his eyes and swung at the ball with all his might. He felt the bat crash against it. He opened his eyes and looked to right field, across the Styx. As he stood there, the pitcher raised his bare hand and gathered in a puny pop fly. There was a howl of derision from the Trojan side of the field.

The Buster had hit the ball. He knew that and he had put all the force and drive of his shoulders into it. It was beyond him. He slunk back to the Greek dugout.

"That scout is getting worse and worse every year," Ulysses was saying. "Look at the kind of ivory he brings me, and they expect me to make a championship team out of bushers like that! He'll never be a baseball player in a hundred thousand years."

THE Buster slunk through the dugout into the clubhouse. He did not sing as he stood under the showers, as had been his wont when he played with the Mastodons. There certainly was nothing to sing about.

"That fellow with the whiskers certainly had something on that ball," he said. "Oh, well, the sky is too high here and I ain't used to it! When I am, I'll knock him out of the lot."

But what was he going to say to Helen of Troy? Oh, well, he reflected, she was crazy about him and, after all, she did not seem to know much about the game. He had a way with women. He could laugh that one off all right.

There was wild cheering outside. Jove had brought in a run with a three-bagger and had won his own game for the Trojans. The Greeks were coming into the clubhouse and the Buster did not care to hear any more remarks from Ulysses. The manager had a very ugly tongue and would not be feeling any too cheerful after losing that game.

The Buster dressed hurriedly and dashed up into the stands. Passing a nectar stand, he paused and drained five flagons in rapid succession. He felt much better. All of his temporary depression vanished. Buster Rooney was himself again. He would rush Helen over to Bacchus' Café and sit there with John L. Sullivan and the rest.

He was annoyed to find a man with a bell-topped beaver and a lavender coat of antique cut sitting beside her and chatting easily. She was blushing beautifully and laughing.

"Oh!" she said. "I want you to meet a friend of mine. Mr. Brummell, this is Mr—er——"

"Rooney, Buster Rooney," he snapped angrily. "The home-run king."

"Oh, yes!" She smiled. "This is Mr. Beau Brummel—Mr. Rooney."

The man in the bell-topped beaver adjusted a monocle to his eye and looked directly over the Buster's head. "I beg your pardon, Helen," he said. "But who is your uncouth friend?"

With an inarticulate growl, the Buster dashed away. He collided with the scout.

"Oh, there you are, busher!" said the scout. "The boss has asked waivers on you and you're going back to New York this minute. You are not ready for the Big League."

AT the hospital, Colonel John Reisling was an early caller. The nurse was still sitting at the head of the bed. The Buster lay there with his eyes closed.

"Passed a very quiet night," whispered the nurse.

The Buster stirred and his eyes opened. He blinked at Colonel Reisling. Then he muttered: "I wonder if I will ever make good in the Big League."

"Send for a lot of doctors!" gasped Colonel Reisling. "He is delirious again."

A half an hour later the colonel descended the steps of the hospital. He was beaming. Reports on his quarter-million-dollar investment were altogether reassuring. The hangers-on swarmed around him. The members of the juvenile baseball team clung to his coat.

"How is the Buster, colonel?" demanded the smallest athlete, with the dirtiest face.

The colonel patted his abdomen.

"He is all right here," he said. "But"—tapping his forehead—"he is not well up here yet."

In the meantime the newspaper extras announced the fact that Buster Rooney would be spared to the national pastime for many years to come. They did not say—because they never learned—that it was only because Buster Rooney could not make good in the Big League.

There will be a humorous story of the A. E. F., called "Coomin' Oop!" by Ralph R. Guthrie in the next number of THE POPULAR.

WHEN you see a man waiting around for his ship to come in, you can bet your last dollar that it will be a receivership.

The Boy who Ran the Wrong Way

By James Hopper

Author of "Kelly, Cordier, Donner and Kent," "The Smoke," Etc.

Columbus discovered America by sailing away from India, his goal; looking for the East, he sailed West. But such methods more often result in failure than in success; and especially in the game of football where to run the wrong way counts against you in the positive way of adding to your opponents' score.

HAL was only a freshman at Whitehall when it happened, and it happened in about one minute—but it colored very decidedly all the rest of his college life. The excuse—if there could be any—lay in the fact that, a new scrub on the football squad, he had been shuffled about a good deal during daily practice. He seemed to be too long for a back and he seemed to be too thin for a linesman; some days the coaches would try him at end, some days as back. On the day that it happened, he was playing end.

It was in a real game, too—one of those early-season contests, against inferior elevens, which give the coaching staff a chance to study their material. Toward the end of the battle, with a good score piled up and everything safe, the coaches had put Hal in at right end to see what sort he might be.

But it must be remembered that he had been playing back a good deal at practice.

Anyway, there came a moment in this game when the Whitehall quarter back gave the signal for a punt. Hal, long, lean and obscure freshman, hungry for glory, crouching all atremble with eagerness at the end of the line, knew exactly what he was expected to do. He must run down under the sailing ball and tackle the man who caught it. In his mind, at that moment, was no confusion.

The ball stirred between the center's hands, and Hal was off at full gallop down the field. After a moment, as he

ran, there came to his listening ears the thump of the ball struck by the punter's foot. Throwing a quick glance over his left shoulder, he caught sight of the rising ball, judged instantaneously its direction and its speed, slightly corrected his own course and tore on with eyes straight before him once more.

These eyes were now on the enemy full back, who clearly was maneuvering to make the catch. On Hal speeded, toward him, but keeping cannily a little to the right, just as, he knew, his brother end was keeping to the left, so that the two were nearing the man, as he set himself for the catch, like the two points of flexible tongs extended and ready to close upon him.

The kick had sent the ball high and fair; Hal got down in plenty of time and halted, a little before and to the right of the man about to make the catch, poised to tackle him the instant he received the ball. But the ball, now coming down almost vertically, was becoming the prey of vagrant winds which swayed it from side to side a bit, as a coin sinking in the sea. Suddenly, the full back, his eyes intent upon it, went forward three short steps, then three more.

This placed Hal, pivoting to hold the man under his observation, with his face toward his own goal. The next thing that happened was that the full back missed the ball. Down it swooped, in a last deflection, grazed his desperately outstretched fingers, struck the earth and went up into the air in a leisurely high bound.

IT was then the queer thing happened to Hal. He was playing end, but at practice he had played half back a great deal. Now, as he stood there, turned around by the pivoting movement he had made to match the full back's forward steps, and saw the ball, still up in the air, beginning to drop toward his very lap, abruptly he became the half back once more. Instantaneous and disastrous reflexes shot up along his spine, along his nerves; catching the ball, gathering it lovingly into the hollowed pit of his stomach, with a drumming of cleated hoofs he was off at full speed down the field.

Down the field in the wrong direction, the wrong way, away from the enemy goal, toward his own, toward the Whitehall goal.

Nothing like it had ever been seen. The stands went dead still: for a long instant there could be heard only the rapid tattoo upon the turf of the unfortunate boy's passionate and misdirected feet. Then the stands, the bleachers, the whole world burst forth in an explosion of pure joy. Strong men tottered against each other, sapped with glee; weak men pounded each other like gladiators.

The extravagance of the performance was being in no way lowered by the single earnestness of its unsuspecting actor. Hal was too long to be swift, and his sincere endeavor to be so was an added happiness. He ran arched, like a bow; his knees hit his chin; his long hair streamed.

Evident it was that, in his ingenuous soul, he saw himself doing something wonderful and navigated absorbed in visions of glory, while conscientiously he zigzagged in elaborate dodgings, utterly unnecessary since no one was trying to stop him—his own comrades, because he was their own; his foes, because he was running their way.

And he might have completed his confused design and made his touchdown against his own team—thus presenting the rules committee with a nice case for next year—if, having successfully eluded twenty-one men of the two teams, he had not come at length face to face with the twenty-second. This was Archie Kerr, his own full back, he who had kicked the ball.

Archie was standing in front of the goal posts, goggle-eyed, hair on end, utterly paralyzed. At the sight of this eloquent dismay, Hal must have felt the first prick of a subtle hint that everything was not right. He was seen to slow up a little, to pause. Then Archie, automatically raising both his arms, became a black cross, and the process completed itself in Hal's burning brain. He stopped short.

But there was something indomitable about the boy. He stopped only to turn; he turned only to run. In a jiffy, he was off again—this time in the correct direction, toward the enemy's goal. The profound innocence of this maneuver plunged the stands into a helpless hysteria—but not the enemy. Eleven of them instantly sobered; eleven of them immediately pounced on Hal; beneath an avalanche of them he disappeared, the shrill whistle of the referee —which all of this time had been trilling and trilling—at length piercing his ears, opened at last to revelation.

Now all this had happened in about a minute. For a minute, twenty thousand spectators had lived the pinnacle of their lives. But in that minute, also, Hal's heroic aspirations and his football career had been ruined. In that minute he had become a joke, and it is terrible to be a joke.

FOR the rest of that season, his first one, he remained just that—a joke. The coaches could not take him seriously; no one could take him seriously. From the stands, at practice, he would be pointed out.

"See that long fellow over there, playing full on the scrubs?"

"Yep. I see him."

"Well, in the Whitehall-Tilden game, he ran nearly the whole length of the field the wrong way."

"No—go on—you're spoofing!"

"Absolutely. He ran the whole length of the field the wrong way. Almost made a touchdown against himself. I *saw* him."

"Well, I'll be darned! Ran the wrong way, eh? That long, lean fellow over there, eh?"

And so through Hal's freshman year. When, in his sophomore year, he once more donned his leather armor and went forth to try for the varsity, he carried about with him a vague hope that perhaps now the past had been forgotten. He was mistaken; it had not. One reason for this was that it had been ticketed.

Some philosopher has said that, in this world, everything sooner or later gets forgotten. That may be true—if it is not given a name. Once ticketed, it is immortal. Hal and his deed of the Whitehall-Tilden game had been ticketed. Some wit on the squad had given him a nickname—"Chief Who Runs The Wrong Way"—in distinction with an end who, on account of his long hair, was known as "Chief Rain In The Face." Hal was now Chief Who Runs The Wrong Way. Most of the time, for the sake of brevity, the name was pronounced simply "Chief." But when any one said "Chief," every one knew that it stood for "Chief Who Runs The Wrong Way." And Hal himself knew better than any one that it stood for "Chief Who Runs The Wrong Way."

Memory still dwelt in the stands.

"See that long lean fellow over there, playing full on the scrubs?"

"Yes, I see him."

"Well, last year, in a game, he ran the whole length of the field the wrong way. Made a touchdown against himself, he did."

"Go on! You're spoofing!"

"No, really—I *saw* him. Ran ninety-five yards the wrong way and made a touchdown against his own team."

"Gee-ee! That long fellow over there, eh? Playing full back on the scrubs?"

There was, of course, something else the matter. Coaches, long-headed and shrewd, are apt to be resistant to mob contagion. Had Hal shown them anything extraordinary, the memory of his freshman misfortune might have had little effect as far as they were concerned. But he was not showing them anything extraordinary.

From the first they had seen his physical defect—he was too thin and too long. Physique, however, is only half the story in a game of ardor such as football. Hal might have overridden this handicap by some flaming quality of dash and courage. But he was not doing it. His grit—and he had it—expressed itself in a sort of subterranean manner. In humility, painstaking self-sacrifice and a touching docility. In qualities precious for a scrub, but which kept him a scrub.

The truth was that the unfortunate début of the Tilden game had crushed him—how thoroughly, none of his gay persecutors guessed. He was unfortunate in that his outside belied his inside; his long melancholy face was that of a humorist. Whenever the ancient jest was hurled at him, his face distorted itself into an amiable grin which seemed to express a slow but thorough appreciation. Yet he was not a humorist at all; beneath that slow gentle smile, Hal's soul was a very hash of misery.

When a freshman, he had been all one wishful fire of ambition to make the team and be a hero. That ambition now was dead. His comic and disastrous experience had cast him into a state of mind which could imagine himself, for the rest of his life, but as a poor fool. The achievement of making the football team was now as far from him as Mount Everest. All he could do now was toil blindly, like a worm, hopeless and resigned. And this he did, obtaining thus a certain modicum of esteem from the coaches—who need scrubs—but raising in them no enthusiasm.

His nose was always skinned; he usually limped on one leg or the other. His long body, from being so often telescoped under the varsity's crushing mass plays, looked a bit askew. His very habiliments in some way took on the color of his soul. His football suit looked always too small. The shrunk jersey sleeves failed to cover his big red, chapped, pathetic wrists; one of his stockings was always down about his ankle.

AND thus he reached his junior year; his third football season. It might be thought that by this time the ancient story of his youthful misstep might be faded and worn. It was not. It enjoyed full life and pristine vigor. It was that sort of a tale which fills the teller of it with a pleasing glow of superiority: such a tale is immortal. And it was so useful to the tongue-tied swain with his girl in the stands!

"Say, Hazel, do you see that substitute on the bench, third from the end—that tall, thin one?"

"Yes. Who is he?"

"Well, when he was a freshman, in a game he got the ball and ran the wrong way. He ran all the way across the field and made a touchdown against his own team. Then he saw that something was wrong, and he turned the other way and ran the whole length of the field again and made another touchdown on the other side. Then he got mixed up again and ran the whole way the *other* way and made a touchdown *there*. Everybody let him go because the referee had blown for the end of the half, and he just kept running back and forth like that all alone. He——"

"Which boy is that, Ed?"

"The third one from the end of the bench."

"Sort of nice-looking boy, isn't he?

I like his hair. Why doesn't he get an elastic for his stocking? Oh, here comes the band! Look at the leader with his big tall hat—oh, I just *love* that, Ed!"

Of course, it was absurd that, by this time, Hal should not be able to shake the thing off his back. One last big laugh he should have given—and then forgotten.

Or, failing this, he might have given up altogether—turned in his suit, abjured the pigskin and all its works and gone to golf, ping-pong, or checkers.

But he could not do this, because he was the sort he was. He was of this sort:

When a freshman he had heard, in mass meetings at the gym, in rallies around bonfires, in the still, close dressing rooms of the squad before games, old grads speak of Whitehall. They came, these old grads, from all parts of the country and regions of time. Some were lean and gray; some were bald and fat; but they all agreed as to one thing: Hal heard that, of all institutions in this broad land, Whitehall was beyond compare most worthy of admiration, of fealty, of affection; that Whitehall was not a simple matter of six white buildings perched on a hill, but something that lived an impalpable life in spirits and minds; that Whitehall, Alma Mater, owned a Soul.

He had heard how great was Whitehall; how beloved always Whitehall had been; how devotedly served; how, to hold up her colors—the beloved purple and gold—always there had been found heroes of fleetness and of strength, and not only heroes, but wealth upon wealth of mute, patient, obscure, humble and unrewarded self-sacrifice.

He had heard all this and, being what he was, had taken it all in utterly. Whitehall—Alma Mater! Actually he could see her at times, throning up there in a daze of sunlit clouds, beautiful and smiling and bountiful. That is the kind he was—we apologize for him—no, we don't!

Of Whitehall, Alma Mater, the football team was the guard, its men her knights. But those knights needed living flesh to grind in order to keep fit, needed scrubs for the furnishing of their skill. Well, he would be of that flesh, he would be of those scrubs. That is why he did not turn in his suit. Again we apologize for him—and don't!

AND so he stuck through his third season, devoted and silent, taking all the knocks, the twists, the aches patiently, Chief Who Ran The Wrong Way, "Chief," the joke. Every day, prompt on time, he was on the field in his worn harness, to serve as dummy to the varsity's practice, to give resistance to their masses. Something to smash, something to elude, something to run from, something to crush—that was Hal, docile, patient, useful scrub.

And thus he came to his fourth season, his senior year, his last. And now to his secret unhappiness a complication added itself.

When a freshman, before that day on which he had made a name for himself by making a long run entirely in the wrong direction, he had been vibrantly ambitious to make the team: it had seemed to him then that all felicity lay in being one of those heroes whom, as a high-school lad, from a distance he had worshiped. And now, a senior, almost at the end of his college life, the killed ambition was giving signs of stirring once more within him.

When a freshman, it had gone with clenched fists, gritted teeth and a joyous will to achieve; now it went without clenched fists or gritted teeth or joyous will to achieve. Yet it was with him all of the time—a regret almost more than a wish, something vague, yet piercing, that hurt.

He could not help reflecting that if he

left college a scrub, all of the rest of his life he would be a scrub.

He could not stop feeling that if he left college a joke, all of the rest of his life he would be a joke.

But the habit of passiveness and hopeless resignation was so strong and settled with him now that, in his playing upon the field, nothing showed of this dim rebirth and this ghost of an ambition. Dully he continued to plod, paralyzed in the invisible meshes of his discouragement. Scrub he was still to the coaches—useful, dependable, patient, touching scrub. And the days of his last season were slipping by, and the weeks.

Now and then he dreamed at night that he was on the team, and woke feeling all the worse for having dreamed. And the days were passing.

FINALLY there were only seven left before the end—the event known as the "Big Game"—the final contest, always, immemorially, with Whitehall's old enemy—which shall be called here Southwestern, just as Whitehall has been called Whitehall. And on that Saturday night, at the behest of the coaches, who had discerned signs of staleness and overtension, a small reception was given to the squad, and there Hal met Rose.

She was a dark-eyed little maid, of a soft, dusky beauty; a subtle tenderness exaled from her, like the discreet fragrance of some gentle darkish flower. She said, sweetly and innocently:

"Are you on the team, Mr. Sanderson?"

Bitterness came to Hal's lips.

"Good Lord! No, Miss Landis, I'm not on the team. Don't you know who I am? *Chief!* Chief Sanderson. Chief Who Runs The Wrong Way!"

Some rude person farther down the veranda lit a cigarette and, in the fleeting flare of the match, Hal saw that the young girl was blushing. Blushing, he knew, with embarrassment at this unfortunate mention of something almost indecent—the monumental faux pas of his freshman days.

The match went out; the darkness flowed back into their corner. The silence that followed was very long. She first broke it, and Hal felt that during the silence she had carefully studied what she now was telling him. She spoke quite low.

"Do you know—Mr. Sanderson—I have been watching you a good deal since—since that day. I sit on the bleachers often, at practice. I think football men are—great. They are brave. I'm just a freshie, but I've been watching football at Whitehall for several years. I have watched you during the seasons."

She paused, for so long that Hal had time to wonder whether she would speak again. But she did.

"Mr. Sanderson," she said, "you lack impertinence. One should own a little impertinence toward the fates. A football man is a brave man. You are a brave man. But courage should be more than endurance. A plume is needed. For the perfect thing, there should be a touch of insolence. Mr. Sanderson—why don't you try insolence?"

Hal's capable, but a bit slow, head was whirling to this rather surprising harangue.

"I don't know what you mean," he said slowly, although, before he got the words out, already he was beginning to vibrate with some stir of understanding.

"One can be too good, you see," the amazing little freshie went on, with level voice. "Too sensitive, too weighed upon by what is past—too *good*—that's the word!—and *that's* no good! Mr. Sanderson, one should never allow the past to get one's goat."

"I am not quite getting you," he said,

but in a tone that meant, "I am not getting you at all"—which was not true.

"Well," she said, very clearly, "as an instance, there's that run you made the wrong way. I understand you cleared the field. An easy way there is to erase that, Chief Sanderson. Run it again—the right way!"

They did not speak after this for a long time. As a matter of fact, neither ever remembered having spoken again that evening, although there must have passed between them, of course, the words with which polite people, when they are silent, apologize for silence. Hal's head was turning and turning.

AT practice on the following Monday, other heads turned. Those of the head coach and his assistants, for instance, who found themselves, at this late day, abruptly presented with a problem. An old scrub full back, who hitherto had given no trouble at all, an old faithful called Chief because of some faded, half-forgotten absurdity of his freshman days, suddenly had gone wild, mad and berserk. He was all over the place, charging, butting, clipping, tackling—a rhinoceros and a catamount. And three times in that afternoon, gathering in a punt, he had dashed clear through the varsity to the safety man—once for thirty yards, another for fifty, another for sixty.

At conference that night, the coaches gave consideration to this phenomenon. The consensus of opinion was that they had witnessed a mere flash in the pan. This was Monday night, the Big Game was coming Saturday afternoon; this was no time to give undue importance to flashes in pans.

But on the following afternoon, at practice, the erstwhile humble Chief proceeded once more to hurl himself all over the place. Such sustained fury seldom had been seen. And running back punts this time, he did not halt at the safety man. Twice with vigorous straight arm he sent that important and astounded gentleman reeling—and gained the last white line.

Once more, at conference that night, was the matter discussed—not so much in joy and in some consternation. It was decided that what had been seen perhaps was no mere flash in the pan. But what to do with it, even if no flash in the pan, no one could very well see. This was Tuesday night, with the Big Game coming on Saturday afternoon. Morton, the regular full back, had played a powerful game all season. Then, after him, was Fournier, almost as good as Morton. Then there was "Biff" Hall. Outside of all other considerations, there was also one of justice; you couldn't at the last moment turn out men who for so long had worked so dependably.

"*After* all," said King, assistant coach in charge of the backs, "you must remember that he did run the wrong way in that Tilden game. I don't suppose *any* other man, in all times, has done that. It's long ago, he's never done it since—but *still*, he did once do it—and there's no getting around *that!*"

Nemesis, who is a good deal of a jack-in-the-box, had popped out once more and settled Hal.

But he did not know it. At the very moment, lying on his narrow bed, he was gritting his teeth and clenching his fists and tightening his will for the morrow. For two days he had shown them—but to-morrow, *that's* when he would show them. To-morrow—— Damn it!—to-morrow he would show them. Chills ran up and down his back, his lean cheeks in the darkness flamed.

So that, on the morrow, he was considerably taken aback when, at practice, no scrimmage was called. There was a sharp signal drill; the squad was trotted around the field for half a mile; then, just as Hal, all keyed up, was

ready to smash into action—and show them—presto, the coach sent everybody off to the showers. Hal was the last off the field. For a full minute his legs had refused to work, while his mouth, wide open, refused to close.

And the next day, which was Thursday, there was no practice at all, nor on Friday. The varsity had been given new sweaters—brilliant, high-striped affairs—and sported them about the campus on outthrown chests. Hal had not been given any; he wore his old one—the old one, bare of letter. And at the one lecture he attended—he was too unhappy to attend the others—a kind, friendly humorist, feeling time heavy on his hands, whispered across archly:

"Say, Chief—remember when you ran the wrong way?"

Hal smiled. He said he remembered.

The signal drill had told him where he stood. He was to be third substitute full back. Thus would be his last appearance, thus he would go out of college—third substitute full back. Also, the boy who once had run the wrong way—a fool! Thus he would go down in the annals of Whitehall.

In the middle of that night, which stretched so long between Friday and Saturday, Hal, waking up and thinking of all this in the darkness and the silence, found himself suddenly taking a bite into his pillow, while a few very hot tears burned it. And then it was Saturday, and then the Big Game was on.

IT proved to be a real battle. Whitehall, which had been polished to perfection and finesse, found itself fronted by a dumb but heavy team which dumbly but heavily wrecked successively all of its subtle plots and oiled maneuvers. It was a brute of a dumb team, which hardly knew what to do with the ball when it had it, but which, not knowing, by accident persisted over and over again in doing just the deadly thing; a brute of a dumb team which kept bursting through irregularly but at the most inopportune moment, shattering again and again Whitehall's beautifullest strategies, so that, aided by Luck, a lady who is apt to be with the heavy and the dumb—if heavy enough—five minutes before the referee's final whistle, it held Whitehall desperate, baffled and beaten.

Five minutes more to play, and Southwestern was in possession of a six-point lead and also of the ball, near the center of the field. To Jack Jordan, Whitehall head coach, who this afternoon had tried every resource and every combination and now sadly squatted on the side line, peering at his bogged and mired champions with the expression of the lithograph doctor who does not know what is the matter with the little girl, there came now crawling from the substitutes' bench a man who fiercely poured into his ear a whisper like molten lead.

"For criminy's sake, put me in!"

It was the terrific crispness of the pronunciation which decided matters. The instant was such, anyhow, as bids a good general take the wildest chance.

"All right, Chief," said Jack Jordan. "Go in there and see what you can do."

And Hal stepped out upon the field—on the varsity at last!

The moment was hardly a propitious one. Southwestern, in the center, was preparing to punt and hence release the ball to Whitehall, which thus would have the entire length of the field to go—a thing hardly to be achieved in five minutes, nor, as the play had been going, in five years. Also, it was up to Hal, now full back and cold from the side lines, to make the catch. But a great peace was in his heart and an exultation in his soul.

He danced backward in the sudden silence that had come over the stands and, when he had reached the proper distance for the kick, looking upward

and back saw the goal posts—his own goal posts. Under their very shadow he stood. But the peril left him exalted and calm; in the dim recesses where great resolutions are forged, he had decided exactly what he should do.

Yes, this was the proper distance. There was a swirling of the two teams over there in the center, a resonant thump, and out of the swirl the ball rose, sailing toward him in a high curve, the two ends under it like two pursuing hawks in an upside-down world. It reached its zenith; it began to slant down toward him. Judging keenly its flight, he took three steps backward and now stood but a foot from his last white line.

The proper, the usual, the safe thing to do at this juncture, of course, would be to let the ball roll over the line, whence, according to rules, it would be brought out twenty yards. Hal thought of this, and simultaneously decided to do no such thing. To no such petty and prudent measure was his soul now pitched. Instead, standing superbly a few inches from his last white line, beneath the black threat of his own goal posts, he caught the ball fair—and started out.

IT must be explained that at this moment Hal had, over the ordinary football player, several distinct advantages. One of them might be termed a combination of innocence of heart and visual imagination. It enabled him actually to see Whitehall, Alma Mater. Over there she throned, high up in flashing clouds, her shining face to him, her arms stretched toward him, bidding him come to her—which was on the other side of the enemy's goal posts.

The same faculty enabled him to be aware at the same time of a little freshie girl of dusky sweetness and amazing wisdom, who one night had told him something about making up for running the wrong way by running the right way, and who now sat in seat No. 14, row 12, section C.

And—to give the flesh its due—it should be added that, during his four years of obscure striving, he had learned some football, and that his legs, which once had been too long, while still long, had acquired a steel-wire-and-spring quality which made him exceedingly fast.

Now, with the ball well tucked under his arm, it was fast, fast, fast he tore down the field. The two ends, he eluded by the simple expedient of flashing between them just as they were coming together—so that, when they did come together, he was not there and it was in each others' stomachs they sank their butting heads. The rest was rather easy. Over there, ahead, from above the enemy's crossbars, throned in clouds of white, his Alma Mater; to the right, knowledge of this a hot spur in his flank, the little freshie sat, row 12, section C, seat No. 14. The one gave him the direction, the other the pace.

The direction was straight ahead, the pace, about forty miles an hour; obstacles encountered on the way counted for little. One he disposed of with a straight arm to the ear, another with a chop down on the neck. Slight swerves slid him by two more; a high-rising knee caught a fifth under the chin; while a dervishlike pivoting freed him of the insistence of a sixth.

"Where are the others?" he thought, as he ran. "They don't seem to be about!"

He heard himself laugh. He felt that he really need not run; he was so light he could float over there like a balloon. There was one last pesky object between him and the finish; he hurdled it—it was the safety man—and went over the last line for the touchdown. It was the touchdown which tied the score and which, converted into goal a minute later, won the game.

It happened that about this time, in that land, a rich gridiron enthusiast and patron of the game had offered a statue as trophy to the one of the two ancient rivals, Southwestern and Whitehall—though those are not their names—which should be the first to win two games out of three. It happened that the game won this day was the second for Whitehall.

The statue now stands on the Whitehall campus. It represents—no one knows just exactly why—a buffalo. But the interesting part is the pedestal. There stand, deep engraved, the names of the heroes who brought the trophy to old Whitehall. And among the names is that of Chief Sanderson. It is carved just that way—"Chief" Sanderson. But no one now remembers what this "Chief" once stood for. The little freshie has proved to have been right; this has erased that; the memory of Hal's right run has blotted out the memory of his wrong one—as the sun blots out night.

About once a year, Hal comes back to the campus and stands a moment before the statue. At his side is the little freshie, now no longer a little freshie, but still possessed of her discreet charm and her clear wisdom. They read the names together, and both their hearts swell a little.

MR. KIRBY MAKES A KICK

THE House of Representatives' committee on war veterans' legislation was inquiring into alleged abuses and incompetences in the veterans' bureau. The lawmakers' object was to formulate a bill to protect ex-service men in the future. Appeared before them Mr. Thomas Kirby, at one time a well-known Washington newspaper correspondent but now the national legislative chairman of the Disabled American Veterans of the World War. In the course of his remarks sternly criticizing the rehabilitation efforts of the veterans' bureau, he emitted this pungent and immortal kick:

"Gentlemen, I read from a list. Here is a man who had vertigo every time he stooped down and seventy-five per cent limitation of his left arm and sixty per cent limitation of his right arm and shoulder. They—the veterans' bureau—trained him to be an automobile repair man although he can not lean over to see the engine without having a spell. Here is a colored man: cannot stand long, as arm and leg are painful—recommended to be trained for farming.

"Here is a man whose mother owns a ranch on which he always worked: he has weak lungs, and they make a shoemaker out of him. Another man with chronic tuberculosis in both lungs they make a linotype operator. A man with defective vision—forty per cent defective vision—a show-card writer. One with chronic lung trouble they make a mechanical draftsman; one with unbalanced mind, bookkeeper and stenographer. Another man, a small-town clerk, has his hearing and mind affected, and they make him an automobile salesman.

"Here is one can walk only a mile and a half: his foot swells, suffering active tuberculosis—recommended for work in a dairy. Another: gassed, has blood in sputum, gunshot wound in arm—formerly a shoe salesman—recommended for dentistry. Another: rheumatism in both shoulders, a chauffeur eight years, elementary school education—recommended for a course of a year and a half in the University of California to make him a Chinese interpreter. And here's another has lost the strength of his right arm: can only raise it to his waist line—recommended for a barber!"

The Lure of Graft

By Charles R. Barnes

Author of "Mrs. Sweeny's Speech," "The Holdup Man," Etc.

Temptation has a perverse habit of making its appearance at those times when the human will is least able to resist its pernicious lure; but Belle Sweeny is made of stern stuff, and her indignation props up her failing morals.

A FEW years ago, shortly after Mrs. Sweeny's lamented husband, Danny, had passed over to the happy roulette grounds, her life became one fraught with anxiety. Danny had left his affairs very much involved; that is, there was a cartload of affairs, but no money to speak of. His career as a race-track bookmaker had not been conducive to thrift; therefore, thrift had taken a back seat, finally departing altogether in despair.

After the funeral, at which the élite of chancedom mourned, the widow found herself possessed of a few hundred dollars and some furniture. Various hotel and café proprietors, who held many I O U's, guaranteed by the signature of Danny, ruefully contemplated the Sweeny estate; after which, they magnanimously tore up those promises to pay, on the principle of—what's the use? Mrs. Sweeny, ignorant of their motive, promptly set them down as fine gentlemen and sighed with relief.

Six months after Mr. Sweeny's demise, the presence of a paying guest in the widow's household became a necessity. Thereupon, the Boarder made his appearance, in response to an ad. Mrs. Sweeny was long in getting used to having him in the house; but she was much slower in accustoming herself to the vicissitudes of metropolitan housekeeping on an income which was remarkable chiefly for its paucity.

Later, the peculiarities of income and outgo lost much of their power to fret, but at the start they worked sad havoc with the harassed woman's mentality.

Her expenses kept her in a state of continual alarm, bordering on panic. At length, she became convinced that her householding enterprise must fail. This was after the first visit from an impatient landlord. After his second visit, Mrs. Sweeny, her heart fluttering in trepidation, sought the Boarder in his study.

"We're goin' to get put out," she solemnly informed him.

"Why?" he asked.

"Why!" she exclaimed, in a contemptuous tone. "Why! B'cause I missed church last Sunday, I s'pose. Why does folks generally get put out of flats, mister?"

The Boarder smiled sheepishly.

"The landlord was up to see me about them two months' rent I owe," she continued, "and I don't see how I'm goin' to pay. He said I'd have to get out Saturday if the thing wasn't settled."

"H'm!" said the Boarder musingly. "That's bad."

"It ain't as bad as it might be," she reminded him, in an effort at optimism, "for he might of said that I'd have to get out Friday. Now, I'd like to know this—what's a lady goin' to do?"

"Can't you see him again?" the Boarder asked.

"What's the use?" she quickly inquired. "He ain't so awful nice to look at."

"Maybe he'd give you more time?"

"I can't kill what I got now."

"I don't believe you take this ejectment prospect very seriously," he observed.

"Honust, mister," she assured him, "it looks seriouser than a crook banker goin' to church. I won't have no place to hang my elegant crayon pitcher of Danny."

The Boarder was silent.

"And it's like this, too," she went on. "There ain't nobody in the fam'ly has got any money except my brother-in-law, Mike Sweeny, the alderman. But he's so crooked that the theaters all let him in free as a perfessional, thinkin' he's a contortionist. His money's so tainted that the board of health has to keep fumigatin' the grocery store where he trades. He might help me, mister, but I wouldn't ask him to."

"I wish I could suggest something," said the Boarder helplessly. He knew that she would accept no help from him. And, being a literary man, he was no adept at solving financial problems.

"I didn't mean to bother you with my troubles," she hastened to inform him. "All I wanted was somebody to tell 'em to. Told troubles is only half troubles, as you might say. Gee, I wisht I was a man. Honust, mister, I'd be a grafter, like my brother-in-law, Mike, is, and alwus have plenty of money. Men has so many more chances to make good than women has. Oh, dear, why didn't I stay to home in West Baden, Indiana, where nobody worries over nothin' except what they're goin' to talk about when they lead in prayer meetin'——"

A SUDDEN sharp ring at the doorbell stopped the flow of words.

"That's the landlord again," she decided. Then she walked slowly from the room, evidently in no hurry to open to the hard-hearted tyrant. But when she had swung back the door, she stared in blank astonishment at the individual without.

"W'y, Mike Sweeny!" she cried.

"Sure, Belle," responded Mike, a well-fed, rat-eyed man of the criminal politician type, "sure it's me. Kin I come in?"

Mrs. Sweeny did not invite him to do so, but stood aside to let him pass, with the air of one who submits to something, rather than welcomes it.

"I ain't saw you for so long," she said, "that two of the kids upstairs has

put on long pants since." She followed him into her tidy living room and offered him a chair.

"Not since they planted Dan," he agreed, glancing at the defunct gambler's portrait on the wall. "I guess mebby you miss him some?"

"It's terrible without him," she admitted, dropping her eyes. "I don't know how I'd stand it if the man across the hall didn't come home full now and then and sort of fetch them lovely days back."

"It's a bum world, ain't it, Belle?" he sympathized. "Even them that ain't got no troubles is worried to death."

"Ain't it the truth, Mike?" she vehemently exclaimed.

HE was silent for a moment, tapping restless fingers on the arms of his chair as he peered questioningly into the pretty, sad, downcast face before him. Then he cleared his throat and placed his hat on the floor beside him.

"Belle," he began, "I wonder if I could get you to do something for me?"

"I don't know," she replied. "What is it?"

"Well," he went on hesitatingly, "it's something I got to get somebody to do —I can't do it myself."

"It ain't no little thing like robbin' somebody's flat, is it?" she quizzed mischievously. "I couldn't do that—I ain't had the trainin'."

"Oh, quit your slammin' at me, Belle!" he exploded. "I ain't no second-story man."

"I ain't got nothin' but your word for that," she reminded him, "and you know, Mike, you wouldn't take it yourself——"

"See here, Belle," he interrupted, "can't you quit it? Listen here! If you'll cut out that kiddin' business and give me the little help that relation has got a right to ask of relation, I'll throw two hundred dollars your way by two o'clock this afternoon. What?"

Mrs. Sweeny did not reply immediately, but rocked thoughtfully to and fro, as if meditating on his words. Presently she asked, in a slow, even voice:

"Is it somethin' they could send you to Sing Sing for, or only to the police court, Mike?"

The alderman reached suddenly for his hat, as if to end the annoying interview. But, as quickly, he put it down again.

"Oh, I s'pose you'll alwus want to spring some fool line of comedy, Belle," he said, "and I guess a guy can't blame a lady for wantin' to indulge her woman's nature in succiety small talk. But this here proposition is serious, Belle, and I'm askin' you this: Would two hundred look like taxicab fare to you, or only somethin' for a kid to get a fistful of marbles with. Does it look good or bad, Belle?"

"I don't mind sayin' that it looks like a saloon's cash register on a Saturday night," she informed him.

"Well, I s'pose I can talk, then," concluded Mike. Then he cleared his throat and crossed his right leg over his left knee by way of preparation.

"I got every reason to think I'm watched, Belle," he began. "The district attorney's office is alwus tryin' to put somethin' on me. And these days I got to be extry careful and not make no careless breaks. So that's why I come to you, Belle. You can help me pull something if you will."

"Why don't you add up all that talk?" Mrs. Sweeny broke in impatiently. "Have I got to help you kill a man, or only poison a valu'ble dog?"

"Listen, Belle," he went on, ignoring her words, "there's several real nice gent'men in my district that makes gamblin' a perfession, and they retain me for—for—for legal services——"

"You mean illegal services," she corrected.

"Oh, shut up!" he wrathfully ex-

claimed. "You don't know nothin' about it, so what you buttin' in for, that way?"

"'Scuse me," she begged, "I was only tryin' to be polite. Some folks would of said criminal services, Mike Sweeny."

Mike glared at her; but evidently the matter at hand was of vital importance to him, for he passed by the fling and went doggedly at his explanation.

"This here's a peculiar deal," he told her. "Them fellers has to give up to the police captain, Belle, and things is so just now that somebody besides the reg'lar parties has to act for him. I'm doin' him a fr'en'ly turn, Belle—that's all I can tell you now. There's about two thousand comin', and we're so scared of them detectives that I'm afraid to take it and they're afraid to give it. So what I want is just this: I'll go out and a man will come 'round about half past one and leave a bundle here. You take care of it and I'll come up and get it a little later on. You won't have to do nothin' but show me where he put it—you won't even have to touch it, Belle. Now, what's the answer?"

Mike stopped as the question left his lips and leaned forward in his chair, impatient for her decision. Mrs. Sweeny did not immediately give it. She gravely contemplated her brother-in-law's anxious face, his tense attitude and his left foot that nervously patted the rug. Then her gaze shifted to the chairs and the table in the comfortable room, the white curtains at the windows, the array of pictures on the walls. She was taking in the detail of her pretty home and balancing it against the infamy involved in Mike's proposal.

"I—I don't know," she stammered, the words coming in a weak, forced manner. "I—I don't know, Mike."

"Go on and do it, Belle," he urged. "It can't put you in wrong with—with anybody." He had "the district attorney's office" at his tongue's end, but forbore to mention it, lest she become frightened.

"You see," he explained, "you ain't supposed to know what's in that package; anyway, nobody's goin' to ask you, b'cause everything will be pulled off so quiet that a thousand detectives wouldn't never suspect nothin' of my comin' here, if they'd followed me a year. I got a right to pay a social call to my sister-in-law, ain't I? Sure I have! Go on, Belle, say the word and the two hundred's yours."

He reached into his inside coat pocket and produced a wallet, out of which he took two yellowbacked bills.

"Here's forty, now, just to show you I mean business," he said, offering them to her.

MRS. SWEENY neither accepted nor refused this money. She sat quite still and stared at Mike. Somehow, the whole affair seemed unreal to her; yet she knew that by extending her hand she could touch the notes and know that they were tangible. Also, it was perfectly clear to her that Mike was showing her a short way out of her predicament. True, she might have to stoop to a questionable act.

"Mike," she suddenly exclaimed, "I know it ain't right to do what you want me to! Any lady would know it ain't right—and I guess most any lady in my circumstances wouldn't care, at that, whether it was right or wrong. I guess they'd do it, wouldn't they?"

"You bet they would," agreed Mike.

"It means helpin' them gamblers to buy up a alderman—to bribe him, don't it, Mike?" she went on. "Ain't it helpin' that same alderman, that's my brother-in-law, to be crooked? Now, ain't it, Mike?"

"Aw," said Mike, "what you talkin' that way for? Go on and help me out, like a real fr'en', Belle."

"I got every reason in the world to, Mike," she said calmly, "but I want to be sure of what I'm doin' first. You see, Mike, they're goin' to put me out of here Saturday, b'cause I can't pay the rent—I ain't got enough money to take a paper for a week. Honust I ain't."

"Well," said Mike quickly, "the two hundred will be enough to fix that rent all right, won't it?"

"Sure it will," she informed him, "and give me enough over to feel safe for a week or so. But you can't blame me, can you, Mike, for wantin' to know just what I got to do for it?"

"No," he agreed, groping for his hat, "it's alwus better to know just where you're at in every deal you go in!" There was a bland smile on his face. He found his hat and arose.

"I guess I better be going now, Belle, and slip Kelly—that's the man with the package—a tip about where to leave it. Them landlords is fierce, ain't they, Belle? Honust, it goes right to my heart to think of you, that's alwus been a true sister-in-law to me, havin' to go through all them things about money, what you do. And say, I'm awful glad I can hold out a helpin' mitt to you, now, Belle. It does me good to think how you're goin' to be able to hand that landlord guy a jolt, come Saturday. Haw-haw, but you'll get him goin', though!

"He'll come 'round for his rent, expectin' to have to heave you out in the street; and all you got to do is to peel it off of that two-hundred roll and hand it to him. Haw-haw! He'll prob'ly have a couple of hands hired to set your stuff out in the avenoo. And what's to it? I ask you—what's to it? When you slip him the rent, he'll have to turn to them boys and say, 'Back up, boys; we'll have to throw out some other widow lady to-day, not Mrs. Sweeny,' he'll say. And when he walks away from here, Belle, just poke your face out in the hall and say 'Haw-haw!' at him, real politelike."

A cheery grin wreathed the Honorable Mr. Sweeny's face, as he concluded. He started for the door, relief showing in his buoyant bearing.

"Are you goin', Mike?" Mrs. Sweeny asked, in a listless voice.

"Yes," he replied, "I got to go and telephone my party about leavin' that stuff here. I'll be back about two."

MRS. SWEENY heard him in silence. She did not arise from her rocker to accompany him to the door. She sat silent in her chair and slowly heaved back and forth, heavily, laboriously. Her eyes were on the floor. It was as if her shame kept her from looking at the departing tempter. She listened as his steps beat a muffled thud-thud-thud on the hall carpet. She heard his hand grasp the doorknob.

"Mike!"

Mrs. Sweeny's voice rang through the apartment, high and imperative. The rattle of the doorknob ceased.

"What?" came Mike's reluctant voice.

"Come back here." It was not a plea, it was a command.

Once again the steps thumped dully on the soft floor covering. Another instant and Mike's face appeared in the doorway.

"What you want, Belle?" he inquired.

"I want to say somethin'," she replied, arising. "I want to tell you a few things."

"Well, make it short," he said, "for I got to get word to my party."

"All right," she consented, "I won't be long about it. First, Mike, you done a bad thing just now. You tried to get away from a woman with the last word."

"Haw-haw!" laughed Mike uneasily.

"There wasn't as much sense in that," Mrs. Sweeny continued, "as there is in teachin' a horse to chew gum. But

that ain't what I'm worryin' about, Mike. This here is what's on my mind —you come up here and offer me a couple of hundred of that dirty money for handlin' it——"

"Now, look here, Belle——" interrupted Mike.

But she straightened herself to the utmost of her inches and fire shot from her eyes.

"You listen to me!" she cried, anger ringing in her voice. "You come up here and make that crooked proposition to your sister-in-law, a lady you ought to respect. And, after you learn about the hard times she's up against, you know awful well that you tempt her. You think you've got her in a place where she's got to sell out her self-respect to you; and you show her money and do everything you can to make her give in——"

"Say, now, Belle——" he wheedled.

"You shut up, Mike Sweeny!" she snapped. "I'm doin' this talkin'! You thought you had me a minute ago—and mebby I had almost give in. I'll say to my shame that I wanted to—yes, I wanted to. But listen, Mike Sweeny, listen! I may be set out on the street and mebby be put in jail for not payin' my rent—I don't know what they do to folks for it—but you just take it from me—I won't do wrong for you now, nor any other time!"

She walked close to him, breathing hard.

"I want you to get out of this house," she said, in a tense half whisper, "and do it now!"

"Say," Mike began, "that ain't no way to talk——"

But Mrs. Sweeny went closer, her manner threatening.

"I said *'now!'*" she repeated, stamping her foot. "Do you understand?—*Now!*"

For a moment Mike looked at her as if debating the wisdom of remaining to plead his case. Then his small, close-set eyes shifted before the intense scorn in hers, and he backed down the hall.

"Aw," was his parting, "you're awful good, ain't you?" Then the outside door closed behind him.

Mrs. Sweeny sank into a chair.

"I'm beginnin' to think I'm a pretty bad one," she muttered, "for I sure did hear that two hundred say: 'Come on, Belle Sweeny, come on!'"

This realization so upset her that it was a long time before she could bring herself to venture into the Boarder's rooms with an account of Mike's visit.

"Mebby I done wrong in puttin' my feelin's b'fore practical things," she said, concluding her narrative, "but somehow I couldn't do no low-down things like he wanted me to, mister. I been worryin' about whether it was right for me to be so finicky, though, on your account; now, you'll be all upset findin' another place and movin'. I might of saved you that by takin' that two hundred. A pusson shouldn't alwus be thinkin' of herself. Have you got it in for me, mister, for puttin' you to all the trouble you'll have to go to, when we get put out?"

"Mrs. Sweeny," cried the Boarder enthusiastically, "you did just exactly right——"

ANOTHER ring at the doorbell broke in on his commendatory outburst.

"That sure is the landlord," guessed Mrs. Sweeny, starting on her second reluctant journey to the door.

But when she opened it, Mike was there. This time she merely said:

"Huh!"

"I'm back, Belle," he muttered, fingering his hat nervously. His face bore a shamed grin.

"What you want now?" Mrs. Sweeny questioned.

"Lemme come in," he pleaded, "and I'll tell you."

His sister-in-law grudgingly swung

the door open and allowed her visitor to pass into the living room. She noticed that he walked in a tired, listless way; his actions showed little of his usual alertness.

"I got somethin' to tell you, Belle," he mumbled, as she took the rocker facing him.

Mrs. Sweeny got up and went to the door, which she closed.

"My boarder might hear you," she explained, "and he's too nice a man to spoil."

"Don't, Belle, don't!" pleaded Mike. "I feel rotten enough. Don't go rubbing it in!"

"Nobody could rub anything in you," she retorted, again seating herself; "you're too tough."

"Say, now, chop it; I feel bad." Mike was really pleading.

"Where?" Mrs. Sweeny asked.

"In my conscience," her brother-in-law specified.

"Then you got a long-distance feeler," she reasoned. "You alwus leave your conscience to home."

"Belle!" There was hurt protest in Mike's tone.

"And you can just keep your eyes off of the gold stripes in my wall paper," she ordered, "or I won't feel that they're safe with you round."

"Look here, Belle," exclaimed the man, goaded to desperation, "you got to quit that now! I ain't goin' to stand for no more of it. I know that mebby I've done some things that folks might criticize me for, but didn't you never hear of a guy gettin' sorry for what he's did? Didn't you, Belle?"

Mrs. Sweeny pondered.

"Yes," she admitted, after a moment's study, "I know of some. Come to think of it, I guess most all criminals does—when they get caught! Has some one put the goods on you, Mike?"

"Naw, they ain't," he assured her; "but I got that sorry feelin', all the same. And I come to tell you so. I guess it wasn't a real gent'manly trick to hand you that go-between business, Belle. Mebby it ain't a lady's place to handle graft money."

"Somehow," she agreed, "I thought so, too."

"Well," continued Mike, "I'm sorry about that. And another thing—when I seen you stickin' up for doin' the right thing, Belle, and you li'ble to get throwed out of the house, it made me kinda shamed of myself, and I says: 'Mike, there's sure some good folks in the world, and you ain't one of 'em,' I says."

"You never knowed that before and you almost in Sing Sing once!" exclaimed Mrs. Sweeny, in mock amazement.

"Well," admitted Mike, "mebby I did know that I might be better. Me and Coogan was talkin' about somethin' like that the other night. Coogan is worth a hundred thousand—all graft, Belle—and he's educatin' his boy Patsy to be a electrical injineer. He says to me: 'Mike,' he says, 'it ain't right to let the lad go our way, is it now?' he says. And I says to Coogan: 'No, it ain't,' I says. 'We got the money,' I says, 'but I keep hatin' to think what's goin' to happen to me after I die,' I says. Coogan and me had a real sorrowful time that evenin', Belle. We put in the time wishin' we had stayed as we was, him a honust farrier and me keepin' the little saloon and my self-respect." Mike drew a large, soiled handkerchief from his pocket and passed it hastily across either eye.

"Well," observed Mrs. Sweeny, "I'm glad you got them high notions concealed somewheres about you. I thought you'd taken 'em and throwed 'em off a dock long ago."

"That's right, go on and roast me!" quavered Mike. "I deserve it. But I'm goin' to try and do different after this. Yes, laugh, if you want to, but I mean it. You shamed me into it,

Belle, by what you done to-day. You made me see myself like I never done before."

"Then," said the heartless woman, "if you've saw yourself in your true light, you'll go and lock yourself in a safe-deposit vault for fear that you'll steal somethin' from yourself."

Mike actually smiled, a sickly half smile.

"Give it to me, Belle," he invited. "I ought to have a good layin' out; you can't say nothin' too hard. Yank me over the coals and lemme set on a good hot one. It'll do me good. I need it. But I got somethin' else on my mind, Belle, and I'll ask you to quit jabbin' me till I get it off my chest."

"What is it?" she asked.

"Do you remember the day Billy Boy wins the handicap and your husband pulls down about sixteen thousand dollars?" was his unexpected query.

"Oh, don't I, though?" she cried. "I sure do remember that there day, Mike. I thought I'd have to send Danny to the psycopathic ward down to Bellevue, he got on that hard a bat. But I pulled him through, right here in this house, with nothin' but a doctor and two nurses. Oh, wasn't them the lovely days, Mike?"

"They sure was—for you," he agreed. "Them times was when you was so happy, Belle. My wife she alwus envied you."

Mrs. Sweeny smiled proudly.

"Danny give me two thousand of that roll he won," she said, "and told me to go and dress up to beat any chorus girl I ever seen. And I done it, too! I got so many dresses that I got a headache decidin' which to wear. Gee, Mike, I looked like a electric sign them days, I did."

"Yes, I remember," he said, "you sure looked swell. But I guess you never knowed all about that money, Belle. I ain't been square with you since Dan died, but to-day you made me feel so low-down and mean that I just got to be. Now, listen! After Dan had cashed in that day, he come to me and says:

" 'Mike, here's a thousand. I want you to keep it for the missis,' he says, 'for I ain't got her provided for,' he says. Then he goes on to say that he kept forgettin' to get his life insured, like he intended to, and a line of talk about never savin' anything. 'Now, Mike,' he says, 'you put that thousand in the bank,' he says, 'and if anything happens to me, hand it over to the missis. I'm goin' to get my life insured to-morruh,' he says, 'or day after,' he says. 'But if I forget, there's enough there to have a funeral with, anyway,' he says."

Mike paused and looked about the room, not daring to meet Mrs. Sweeny's eyes. She was sitting straight up in her chair, gazing at him in amazement.

"After he was shot," resumed Mike, "I had some bills, and such, come in all at once; and you never said nothin' about the money, so I figgers that Dan never told you about it. And so I never paid, Belle. I'm a thief—just a common, ordinary thief. And that's somethin' that never was said again' the Sweenys, Belle. No Sweenys ever was no thief."

ONCE again the handkerchief was dragged forth and applied to the speaker's damp eyes. Then it was replaced in the pocket whence it came. The next instant, a wallet was produced from the inner recesses of the alderman's clothing—a wallet bulging with green and yellow bills.

"Belle," said Mike, in a choked voice, "here's the money. Take it. It's yours by rights. All I ask of you is that you'll give me a chance to show you that there ain't nothin' on earth I want to do more'n turn square." He handed her a package of notes. "When I went

out of here a while ago," he explained, "I hustled round to the bank and drawed this out."

Mrs. Sweeny seemed dazed.

"You mean it's mine?" she asked, in a hushed voice.

"It sure is, Belle," he affirmed. "And now that my conscience is clear, I'm goin'." He picked up his hat and arose. "There's just one thing," he pleaded, "that I want to ask of you, and that is this: When you start in thinkin' hard of me, Belle, I wisht you'd remember that I tried to be square once and got away with it. And I'm goin' to try my darnedest to make a reg'lar thing of it."

Mrs. Sweeny leaped to her feet.

"Mike Sweeny!" she cried, grasping his hand, "you ought to be in jail——"

"Now, Belle——" he protested.

But she took his other hand and squeezed both of them as hard as she could.

"But if anybody ever tries to put you there," she whispered, with the tears rushing to her eyes, "I'll cry all my handkerchiefs into the biggest laundry bill you ever saw!"

Another Mrs. Sweeny story will appear in the next issue of THE POPULAR.

EMOTIONAL APPEAL

FEW of us pause to consider, while watching a picture play on the screen, that the chords of our emotions are all uncovered and are but waiting to be struck, either harshly or gently, by the story unfolding before our gaze. Yet this is true. It can be proved scientifically that our emotions are more easily stirred through our eyes than through any other sense organ. Nature has given us the opportunity to develop this characteristic and we, through our natural mode of life, have completed the job.

We have found, through experience, that it is comparatively easy to fool any one or all of the senses of hearing, feeling, touching or smelling. But we also have discovered it to be extremely difficult to fool the eye. From our very infancy, we have learned to place our trust in the reality or unreality of things in our sense of sight.

Long before we have begun to utilize, in a practical manner, our other sense perceptions, we have taken cognizance of, have become affected by, and have established the actuality of our visible surroundings. This belief in the infallibility of the eye grows as we grow and, as a result, when we become adults and doubt what we have heard, felt, touched or smelled, it is then entirely reasonable and natural for us to say, "Show me." We must see in order to believe, for "seeing *is* believing."

We look upon the magician as a marvel, because he is able to do what seems to us to be the impossible—he can deceive our very eyes. And it is because of this unerring eye of ours—this eye which has built up our confidence with such long and unfaltering faithfulness—that we lay aside our doubts and suspicions of the impressions it conveys to our brain, with which it is in direct contact. We accept, without question, these impressions as the truth.

Our conscious mind, which accepts or rejects as it chooses, does not serve as the barrier as when the other senses are involved. Our suspicions, which would otherwise be aroused, are lulled and we do not have to use our reason. The visual story, at which we are looking, goes directly into the subconscious mind. And it is in the subconscious mind that lies the real seat of the emotions. Thus it is that the picture play has in it the wonderful power to raise us to great heights of emotional exaltation.

By

W. B. M. Ferguson

Author of
"Deep Water,"
"The Banister Mystery," Etc.

The Dumb-

THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS.

"BABE" ARMSTRONG.—The middleweight boxing champion of the world, otherwise "The Dumb-bell."

JOE CARP.—Babe's manager, and "a man of ideas" who has a faculty of getting more than his share of the coin of the realm.

OTHER CHARACTERS.—Jack Slade, an amateur boxer, bearing a slight resemblance to Armstrong. Anne Forgan, who befriends Babe and nurses him back to health.

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE.—Joe Carp, the wily manager of the world's champion middleweight boxer, "Babe" Armstrong, had no illusions as to the nature of his calling. This calling, he freely admitted, was to retain the title for his charge as long as was possible, and just so long as there was easy money to be gotten by the possession of the crown. That is why Carp contracted for the reluctant Armstrong to appear as the hero of a thrill melodrama, before a mid-Western public who had never seen the champion operate in the ring. But Armstrong, to whom Carp used to refer as "that dumb-bell of mine," upset these plans by meeting a serious motor accident while on a spree in New Jersey. The injured boxer was taken to Highview Farm, where Anne Forgan and her grandfather agreed to take care of the young man until he was recovered sufficiently to move elsewhere.

Carp, never at a loss for an idea, hired Jack Slade, a down-and-out amateur boxer, who bore a slight resemblance to Babe, to double for the latter on the mid-Western circuit until the time when the champion should be well enough to go before the footlights himself. Although Babe protested against this palpable fraud, his sickness and habit of yielding to Carp in all matters of judgment decided the issue in the manager's favor.

The convalescent Armstrong learned from Anne Forgan, who was led to believe that Carp and he were two good friends, named Jones and Stewart, interested in the leather business, that the outside world thought very little of a boxer who ran away from all contenders for his title. His eyes were opened to the shabbiness of his profession and he determined to act differently when he should be well again.

In the West Slade was doubling for Armstrong with huge success, and no one knew of the deception being practiced but the participants in the affair—Slade, Mullins, the trainer, Armstrong and Carp. All four were bound to Carp in one way or another. After several months, Carp was making a clandestine trip East, with the intention of bringing Babe back West with him to finish out the contract in person.

The quixotic adventures of the middleweight boxing champion of the world.

bell In Five Parts—Part II. :: :: ::

CHAPTER VII.

THE GLASS DOME.

THIS is a hellova note!" exclaimed Carp, when at length they were alone in Armstrong's room, in the Forgan home. He threw off his coat and walked the floor. "Here I break my neck getting everything working right and then this has to go and happen! It ain't fair! Why didn't you tell me about it instead of leaving me to find it out?"

"You told me not to write——"

"Couldn't you of wired, you dumbbell?"

"What good would it have done? We can't do anything to change it. My face will always look this way."

"I ain't thinking of your looks!" snapped Carp. "I ain't told you yet that I met Doc Willing on my way here. You been operated on, huh?"

Armstrong nodded.

"About a week after you'd gone. He did it right here without any help. It was that constant headache I had. He said it was a bit of bone pressing on a nerve or something. He fixed it. He's mighty clever, though it didn't really amount to anything."

"Didn't, eh? It amounts only to this—your fighting days are about over."

"Piffle, Joe!"

"There ain't no piffle about it. You gotta glass head now, instead of a bone one, see? Of course Doc Willing don't know you're a pug, but I got it outa him that if you was to get pipped on that spot even with a glove you'd be knocked cold. You couldn't stand an ordinary wallop, and a haymaker would kill you."

Armstrong laughed.

"A haymaker or Mary Ann on the temple's liable to kill anybody, Joe—if you're fool enough to let it land. You know that. What would I be doing when that circle was coming round? Yes, Doc Willing said I must be careful, that I had a weakness there. That's nothing new; I guess my head has never been my strong point. If I'd nothing but a punch—— You could

have a dozen glass heads or jaws if you're able to take care of them and if nobody knows you've got 'em. That's the point, Joe; nobody knows I've got it, for the mark's up under my hair. And what they don't know won't hurt them—or me either."

"Well, there's a lot in that," conceded Carp, looking relieved. "Of course if they did know, it would be curtains for you. How are you feeling—as good as you look?"

"Better."

"Well, then, I tell you what we gotta do; we gotta have this here accident of yours all over again for the benefit of the dear public. Of course it won't be so serious. It'll happen over near where we're playing—you'll be on an ottermobile ride with me—and after you've laid up a short spell you step in and take Slade's part, see? That'll mean canceling only a week at most, and what we lose on that we'll more'n make up on advertising. We'll have you stop a runaway or something, and you'll get a big hand when you show on the boards with that scar.

"You'll be a real hero, kid, a sure-enough red-blooded he-man!" he went on. "Why, the more I think about it, the better it smells! It'll go great. We can stage an elegant fake, have you lay up in the sticks at a dump like this and charge the rubes for coming in and having a slant at you. It's only a real genius like me who can turn a bump like this into a benefit. Leave it to me. I'll dope the whole thing out to a fare you well."

"You needn't, Joe. I'm not going to take Slade's part."

"You mean to let him finish the season? But there's no use taking a bigger chance than you have to, or paying Slade all that good coin either. And the nearer we get to the coast and the big towns——"

"You don't get me, Joe. We're going to can that bum show and I'm going to take the ring. Cancel the rest of our engagements and get me a match—preferably with Spike Maguire."

"My God!" said Carp, dropping his half-smoked cigar. Then he laughed. "Say, you're some little kidder, huh? You can be funny as a hearse at times. Now as I was saying——"

"There's no kid about it, Joe. I'm in dead earnest."

The shoe-button eyes narrowed suddenly and bored into the blue ones, trying to dominate them as of old.

"Say, too much is enough! If you think I got nothing better to do than listen to small comedy like that—— Say, hire a hearse and give yourself a ride. I tell you——"

"There's no use starting on that line of talk, Joe. I've made up my mind and nothing can change it. Save your breath."

CARP was baffled, incensed, alarmed. There was not only a look in those eyes that he knew of old, when Armstrong became stubborn over some question of training, but a something he had never seen there before. He could not put a name to it and, like an animal, he was afraid of what he could not understand.

"You poor fish!" he said at length, for lack of a really appropriate phrase. "You mean you're gonna let all this easy coin slide after I got it as good as salted in the old sock? Have you any idea what you're gassing about?"

"Never better, and it's not gas, Joe," said Armstrong. "It's not easy money, Joe, but the hardest we ever got. Damn it all. What's the use of pretending, of trying to fool ourselves? It's nothing but highway robbery, a rotten crooked deal. You know that, I know it, and all the fine words in the world can't make it any better."

Carp threw up his hands.

"Something's happened to your head, all right. I guess when Doc Willing

removed that piece of bone he took all the brains you ever had. What's crooked about it, for the love of Mike? Ain't I *telling* you to take Slade's place?"

"I'm not an actor, Joe; I'm the middleweight champion."

"Yeah? And just to prove it, you're gonna quit a sick bed and take a slam at that bird Maguire, the toughest nut in the whole yapping bunch? You wanta hand the champeenship to him on a silver plate? Aw, say, come alive, kid! Be yourself!"

"Yes, I intend to. It's about time. We'll see who's the four-flusher, Maguire or me. Cut out this prohibitive guarantee stuff, Joe, making him weigh in ringside, and all the other tricks. He can come in at any weight he likes and for any stake he can raise. And that goes for the bunch. The color line is off and I'm open to meet anything on two legs that thinks he ought to be champion."

Carp, open-mouthed, wiped his rudimentary and perspiring forehead.

"You've gone absolutely cuckoo!" he said, rolling his eyes. "You hadn't ought to be loose. I never heard nothing worse in a bughouse. You ain't feeling right; go to bed and pound your ear——"

"I never felt better, Joe, inside and out. I've had time to do some thinking, some house cleaning, that's all. I got off on the wrong foot in this fight game. I'm not blaming you for anything, understand; I'm equally responsible. But both of us have been looking at it from the wrong angle. We've been able to see nothing but money, Joe."

"Yeah? Well, you couldn't of found it with a telescope, kid, if it hadn't been for me. Up to then you'd been able to see nothing but the poorhouse. Don't forget that. I made you, I brung you up, didn't I? What else do you wanta see—stars? You'll see plenty of them, all right, if you start fighting anybody after a sick bed. If you ain't raving crazy, Babe, you'd ought to be. I never listened to such tripe in my life!"

"We've taken the wrong view of it," persisted Armstrong. "Boxing should be more than a business, Joe, and a champion should stand for more than the dollar sign. He has a very great responsibility and he should represent the best national characteristics instead of the worst. He should be as fine a man inside as he looks outside. I can even imagine, Joe, that such a champion would be one of the best forms of national propaganda——"

"Sweet mamma! Hey, where do you think you are? Where did you get all that blah? That ain't you spouting; it's some crazy book. Or mebbe Little Red Riding Hood downstairs."

"If you mean Miss Forgan, cut it out! If you don't know a lady when you see one, it's time you did."

Carp's brows went up and he displayed the gold tooth.

"'Oho, sits the wind in that quarter?' as the poet says. So it ain't been quite so dull here, huh? Ah, you little rascal, these village maidens——"

"Shut up, Joe, or I'll swing on you! I mean it. I owe Miss Forgan and her folks more than I can ever repay. If you can't appreciate all they've done, and the sort of people they are, then you're a lot lower than I thought. Just because they live here and aren't rich and don't charge for their hospitality and charity, you needn't think it gives you the right to make a crack like that."

"Ca'm yourself, my young friend. Ca'm yourself," said Carp, waving the beringed hand. He spoke coolly, but his eyes were hot. "Take a joke, can't you? There ain't no need to pull this red-blooded he-man stuff in private; you ain't on the boards and nobody's listening but me. You certainly ain't

yourself, whatever's the matter. This bug idea—why, say, if fighting ain't a business, what is it?

"I'm willing to discuss it with you ca'mly," he went on. "According to this bug idea, you'd be willing even to meet the heavyweight champ for a coupla gravy spoons, huh? That's what it comes to. If that's your idea of making a living, the sooner you take up road sweeping, the better. It's the only way you'll ever make any money following the ponies, too."

"Don't be childish," said Armstrong patiently. "You know as well as I that champions have gone out of their class before this to make a match and a challenger has been made to hopelessly weaken himself, too. The two things aren't the same. Yes, I don't see why we shouldn't be able to discuss it all calmly; you're no fool, Joe, and you know perfectly well what I mean. If Spike Maguire four-flushes when I call him, I'll take on any light-heavyweight that wants a match.

"Either I'm the middleweight champion of the world, or I'm not," he continued. "If I am, then it's up to me to meet anybody who's allowed in the game, whether he's red, blue or black. There's no real excuse for the color line; there never was, and you know it. It's not drawn in any other sport. If I consider it degrading to fight a colored man, then I should never have entered the game. If I'm the middleweight champion of the world then, for Heaven's sake, let's chuck this miserable, huckstering, sidestepping business and act as one! And if I can't get a match in my class, I'll go out of it."

Carp made a derisive gesture and some unintelligible comment.

"I'm not proposing to give away weight recklessly or fight for nothing," continued Armstrong, walking the floor, "but I say we can stop using those things and others as excuses for running out of a match. And we can earn a good living without extortion. I know everybody's doing it, but that's no excuse. The game's in a pretty bad way, Joe, and getting worse every day. There should be legal control of some sort. I guess we've done our share to put it on the bum; now we ought to do our share to put it right. If we give a lead, others will follow. Even taking the lowest view of it, we're killing the goose with the golden egg. The public's getting mighty sick of this hair splitting, the big purses and all the rest of it."

"Yeah?" said Carp. "Well, ain't that too bad! They were saying that ten years ago, and ten years before that! I guess the big purses will last my time and yours, and that's all we care about. And, if I've anything to do with it, they'll get bigger. This fine lead you're gonna give 'em—meeting all sorts of bums every week, huh? How long do you figger you'll last? How long do you think you'll have any title to defend?"

"There's a happy medium, Joe, between once a week and once a year. I propose to meet any and every challenger for the title, whatever his color or reputation, that any reputable promoter backs. I'll meet them at reasonable intervals and for reasonable purses. It doesn't matter how long I last; my business will be defending the title, not making easy money in side shows. I'm sick of keeping it in a glass case, nursing it like an invalid.

"The man who can whip me is entitled to it," he went on, "and he's entitled to have a crack at it without having to hurdle all these fences we put up. I don't intend to spend my life in the fight game, but while I last I'm going to play it as I think it ought to be played! And I guess I'll last long enough to put our bank rolls back where they belong. Now I've never talked so much in my life and it's all the talking I'm going to do, Joe. You

can tell Maguire I'll meet him two months from to-day."

Carp bounced from his chair and began to wave his arms like a semaphore.

"I'll do no such of a thing! If you're raving crazy, I ain't. If you pass up this theatrical kale, what about the money I lose, huh? It don't matter to you if I land in the poorhouse. You gotta keep this contract, Babe——"

"I haven't and I won't. That's final."

"Then," said Carp, with an oath, "I'm offa you, you big dumb-bell! You've give me one rotten deal after all I done for you. If you're stuck on committing suicide, you don't need no help from me. I'm offa you for life. I ain't gonna manage no raving lunatic."

"All right," said Armstrong, with compressed lips. "I'm sorry, Joe, if we have to bust up like this; but if you're as set as I am about this thing, then there's nothing else for it. I'll get another manager if you say so. You're the doctor."

Carp plucked his coat savagely from the chair.

"I ain't said so, though it would serve you blamed well right if I did. You'd ought to have a manager like some of the bunch I know. You don't deserve one like me. I ain't never been appreciated. I brung you up; I made you—but I done so much for you that I can't leave you cold, leave you to be skinned alive by the highbinders in the game. You need a guardeen more'n ever you did, because your head certainly ain't right. I'll leave you to sleep on it. We'll talk it over in the morning when mebbe you'll see things different."

AMONG his other attributes Carp possessed a temper which promised to get him into serious trouble some day, and he left Armstrong's room thus peremptorily through fear of saying or doing something that would make matters irrevocably worse. He knew that the morning would find no change in the other's decision, but he wanted time in which his own temper would cool and he could think over the situation.

To accomplish this the better, he lighted a cigar and went down to the veranda instead of to bed like Armstrong. The hospitality of which Armstrong bragged was nothing more than burial alive, still it was preferable to tramping those miles to Red Bank. He would only have to spend a night or two, anyway; Armstrong would have to quit this dump as soon as they got the future doped out.

He would like to knock the sawdust out of that big stiff, yet he mustn't quarrel with him, for the ingrate had shown that he was quite willing to accept his release. With that glass head the possibility of a chance blow finishing Armstrong increased enormously; and if he insisted on meeting all comers, fighting continuously, that possibility became almost a certainty. It was even possible that the contemplated fight with Maguire might be his last. But because a profitable gold mine showed signs of petering out, that was no reason to let somebody else work it, make them a present of it.

"At the worst I ought to get a nice figger for this Maguire go," Carp thought, summing up the situation. "As a scrapper, that dumb-bell's through, even if he don't know it; and if he won't play for the easy coin, then he can fight his wooden block off. I don't care if he's killed in the ring, but I'd ought to make a good clean-up while he lasts. And mebbe he'll last a good bit yet."

He smoked contentedly.

"Meanwhile I gotta look out for another boy," he thought. "Slade ain't shaping bad. If I got him a match, through a dummy manager, with this

dumb-bell and put him wise to the glass head—— Yeah, if he pipped him on that spot, he'd have the title. He'd do what nobody else has done—knock Babe out stone cold. Slade could live on that rep for a coupla years, anyway. I'd come out as his manager, and Slade couldn't throw me down like this ingrate, because I got him dead to rights. As champ I could nurse him along, keeping him from meeting any tough nut. And he has the right idea about getting the coin."

He smoked some more.

"Say, you're a man with ideas, Joe, and that ain't a bad one!" he thought. "Why, the more I think of it, the better it smells! Armstrong wouldn't know, of course, that Slade was hep about the glass dome. And if he ain't gonna bar a man because he ain't got a rep, then there ain't no reason why he shouldn't meet Jack Slade. If I could get him to meet him before meeting Maguire, so's to make sure of Slade getting the title—give him first chance, anyway——"

Mr. Carp's pleasant thoughts were interrupted by Miss Forgan.

"Oh, is it you, Mr. Jones? I thought I heard some one—— The front door was open——"

Her embarrassment was as pretty as her attire. Carp believed he knew the meaning of both. No doubt she thought it was Armstrong who had come downstairs and they had been accustomed to meet here when the old folks were safely abed. Sure, why not? What else was there to do in a graveyard like this?

CHAPTER VIII.

WHAT A WALLOP!

NOBODY ever knew what happened that night at the Forgans', apart from the three immediately concerned. It was not a thing that any of them cared to talk about. And perhaps of the three, Armstrong alone had a clear idea of everything. Certainly part of the proceedings was a complete blank to Carp; there was no doubt that Armstrong possessed a punch and it generally produced a blank in some conciousness when it landed.

Carp had always boasted about this "wallop," but this was the first time he had been able to judge personally of its merits; and he decided that for once he had understated the truth. He considered himself unfairly treated all round, a victim of the most unfortunate circumstances. Not only had Armstrong not gone to bed, like any regular fellow, but he had come downstairs at precisely the wrong moment. As for that hick jane, words failed to describe her. She had finally run and locked herself in her room like the persecuted heroine in a screen drama. Her conduct was simply sickening.

When Carp properly got his bearings again, he was upstairs in his own room, the lamp was lit and Armstrong stood regarding him in a most peculiar manner. Carp had never seen him look quite like that, but he was relieved to note that it did not presage a further demonstration of the wallop. Armstrong seemed more pained, even dazed, than angry. Thus reassured, Carp determined to carry off the matter in his customary manner.

"Say, whaddaya mean by handing me one like that?" he demanded, arising from the bed and holding his aching jaw. "Can't a guy have a little bit of fun without a dumb-bell like you horning in and acting like a crazy man? I can explain that little affair——"

"It explained itself, Carp. The less you say, the better. Yes, I've been a dumb-bell long enough, but I'm through. Get busy; pack your things."

"Huh? Whaddaya mean?"

"What do you think I mean? You've made it impossible for us to stay here another night. Not only your conduct, but saying to Miss Forgan, when she

told you what she thought of you, that she'd been carrying on with me—— Don't try to lie about it; I heard you and all the rest of it, too!"

"Aw, take a joke, Babe! Be reasonable, can't you? That dame's got me in wrong. And, honest, I didn't know you was really stuck on her. I didn't know you'd made a date and was coming down——"

"You say another word like that and you'll leave here feet first! I can never apologize enough to the Forgans for bringing the both of us here. The only thing we can do is to get out. You've queered me properly. Hurry up!"

"You're crazy! There ain't no train, but the milk one. If you think I'm gonna hoof it——"

"You'd hoof it every step to Red Bank if we had to. But you forget my car. There's nothing wrong with the engine and I overhauled her today. Get a move on. Are you coming, or have I got to throw you out?"

Carp swallowed an oath and turned sullenly to begin his packing. There was no use arguing with this lunatic, for he was in one of his pig-headed moods. He would never forgive Armstrong for this treatment and that blow—it was another item in the score that he meant to pay off some day—nor would he ever forgive Anne Forgan.

She was responsible for the whole thing. She had made worse the strained relations between himself and his charge. An open break must be averted at all costs and now he should have to placate the dumb-bell, eat humble pie and smooth everything over. Of course it would outrage his feelings to do this, but it must be done. What were feelings, anything, when it came to a question of profit and loss?

MEANWHILE Armstrong had gone to his room and, having finished packing, sat down at the little table, chewed the end of his fountain pen and stared at a sheet of paper. There was so much he wanted to say, yet could not. Finally, however, he evolved the following:

DEAR MISS FORGAN: I am ashamed and sorry for what has happened. It is all my fault because if I had been perfectly sober that night the accident couldn't have happened, and then you wouldn't have been so insulted by this friend of mine. But in one way I'm glad the accident did happen, because if it hadn't I never would have known you and your people. I'm no good at writing, and so I can't begin to say how much it has meant to me. I can never forget or repay all your kindness.

I'm sorry to leave like this, but I guess it's the least I can do. The two hundred dollars is for Doctor Willing, balance of his account. I wonder if you'd do me a last kindness by giving it to him? I am returning to New York and then going out West, and don't know when I'll be back. You won't want to see me ever again, anyway.

Thinking over that last talk we had, I guess you were right about prize fighters and the sort of company they keep—some of them, anyway.

I'll keep my promise about never getting drunk again. I've had my lesson and you've opened my eyes to a lot of things. I wish you the best in life.

He could not bring himself to sign the false name of Stewart, nor could he append his real one; so he omitted the signature. It was an unsatisfactory letter at best, but he had neither the time nor ability to compose a better. For that matter this whole method of leave taking was unsatisfactory, to say the least, but he felt there was no choice.

He propped the letter and money against a picture on the mantelpiece, picked up his suit case, turned out the lamp and went across the hall to Carp's room, that gentleman having finished his packing.

"Don't make any noise," warned Armstrong. "I'm not going to place Miss Forgan in the position of having to ask us to stay. Move along and watch your step."

The girl's room was in another corridor, so it was unnecessary to pass her door, and the rest of the inmates were snoring audibly. The man of all work slept at home and, when they reached the barn, there was no one to challenge them, nothing but the watchdog, whose incipient growl died as it recognized Armstrong's voice. The racing roadster had been in the barn since the accident and, apart from the smashed wind shield and running gear, it appeared to have escaped almost as miraculously as Pop Mullins himself.

Carp had affected a cheerfulness and philosophic acceptance of the situation he was far from feeling, doing all in his power to humor and placate Armstrong. He called this process "salving" and hitherto it had always succeeded. But now the salve failed to work properly, Armstrong returning monosyllabic replies or none at all.

SO things continued as they coasted silently down the hill past Highview Farm, through sleeping Milton Center and Red Bank, where they turned north, the coast route being the only one that Armstrong knew thoroughly.

"Sore as a crab, the big stiff," thought Carp, as, in the clear moonlight, he glanced at Armstrong's set mouth. "I'd like to hand him a good swift kick in the pants, the dumb dumbbell." Then aloud, he said, in his assumed jocular manner: "Say, this is all very well, Babe, but ain't it time we had a talk about this here midnight ride of Paul Revere? Ain't you kinda forgotten that you're supposed to be out in South Bend, Indiana?"

"No."

"Well, but look here, you can't be two places to once! Nobody can. It won't do a-tall. If you and me is seen skitting round Noo York together——"

"We won't."

"How do you know we won't?"

"We won't be seen together in New York or anywhere else. You and I are through, Carp."

Carp's jeweled hand, about to place a cigar in his mouth, paused in midair. He hitched round in his seat as though he had not heard aright. But there was no difficulty in hearing; the big six was droning along, eating up the miles almost without sound, Armstrong slouched behind the wheel and staring straight ahead. It was a beautiful night, but the thoughts of these travelers were not beautiful.

"*Through?* Whaddaya mean?"

"Just that," said Armstrong. "When we hit Manhattan, we part for good. No, I'm not going to quit the game, not yet a while anyway; not until I've played as I explained to you. But I'm going to get another manager."

"Art thou indeed 'Eustace Marshmallow?'" said Carp, and laughed loudly. "The hell you are! Say, what's eating you? Lemme tell you you're acting like a overgrown kid. Lay offa this grouch. Ain't I apologized for that little break back there? This here joke has gone far enough——"

"I'm not joking."

"You ain't, hey? Well, you'd better be. Say, whaddaya think contracts are for? And whaddaya think I am—a dumb-bell like you? You're tied to me hand and foot for the next eight years, understand? You can't earn so much as a nickel in the game without my say-so and signature, and you can paste that in your little brown hat. You're gonna fire *me*, hey? I should laugh, my young friend. I should laugh!"

Carp's long-smoldering temper was bursting into flame and he was further heartened by Armstrong's silence, the apparent effect of these words.

"Now, you listen to me!" he continued, waving the cigar menacingly. "I've had enough of this here Gloomy Gus stuff and I've stood all I'm gonna from you. You'd better take a tumble to yourself while the tumbling's good.

There's a limit even to *my* good nature. I humored you because you been sick, but too much is enough."

"I quite agree, Carp."

"Well, then, lay offa it, I tell you! You'd better understand that me giving you a release, and you breaking the contract, ain't the same breed of pups a-tall. Not by a million miles! If I like, I can keep you from fighting for eight years; I can do it and I've a good mind to. If I don't manage you, nobody will. If you think my contract ain't what I say, just go ahead and try to crawl outa it. It's a copper-bottomed, double-riveted——"

"I'll take your word for it," interrupted Armstrong, in the same level and almost impersonal tones. "I guess you saw to it that I signed away everything but my life. I might be able to break it, but I've no money to spend on the law and you'd probably beat me anyway. I don't intend to fight it. I guess you'll give me a release."

"Guess again, 'Hector Plantagenet.' I'll release you nothing, not a day, not a hour, not a minute. Whaddaya take me for?"

"Anything but a fool, Carp. If you refuse, then I'll make you."

"*Make* me? Say, where do you get that stuff? Oh, you mean you'll howl about this Slade business? You're low-down enough for that? Well, go ahead; I can stand it if you can. I don't have to depend on public favor for a living. And you needn't try to pose as no angel of innocence; you'd as much to do with it as me. And if it comes to that, I can prove the whole idea was yours and that I had no choice. Slade and Mullins will back me up, say whatever I tell 'em to."

"I don't doubt it," returned Armstrong. "I suppose you've got some strangle hold on Mullins, like you have on Slade, else he wouldn't have been party to this fraud. I'm not trying to dodge my share of the responsibility, but I guess if my head had been right I'd never have stood for it, either."

"Sure, that's right; lay it all on you being sick," sneered Carp. "The public will believe that. Of course you didn't know what you was doing."

THEY had passed the Highlands and Belford. Armstrong did not speak again until Keansburg also had been left behind and they were nearing Keyport. Then he said deliberately:

"It hasn't anything to do with Slade, and what happened at the Forgans' was only the finishing touch. You dropped a letter in my room to-night, Carp; I guess it must have fallen out of your coat when you yanked it off the chair. Neither of us saw it at the time, but I found it later."

Carp experienced a sudden sinking sensation. The sweat broke out on him as he clapped a hand mechanically to his breast pocket.

"That's the reason I left my room," continued Armstrong. "I went to your room to tell you what I thought of you; you weren't there and then I heard what was going on downstairs. That letter wasn't in an envelope and I saw enough to make me curious to read the rest of what Sol Bloom had to say about you and me. Oh, yes, and Snelling, too. I guess it's the only way I'd ever have learned the truth. As you've often said, I was a dumb-bell and, as I've told you, I've stopped being one. I guess that letter would cure anybody."

"I don't know what you're talking about," mumbled Carp, through dry lips. "You're a bigger dumb-bell than ever if you believe what Sol Bloom says. Why, he was only trying to shake me down——"

"Shut up, you cheap crook," said Armstrong, suddenly savage. "If I did right by you, I'd beat you to a pulp. You've skinned me alive since the day we first met. All that money I was

fool enough to bet on the ponies—you never placed a cent of it, but split it with Sol Bloom. Nine times out of ten I picked an also-ran, and you helped me with the wrong tip. When I couldn't help picking a winner, I got the coin; all the other times, you and Bloom got it."

"Nothing of the kind, Babe! You got me down all wrong. You don't wanta believe a word that highbinder says. I'd a run-in with him——"

"Yes, I guess you had, you couldn't be straight even with him and he threatens to blow everything to me if you don't make it right. The old case of crooks falling out. He even knows about that oil company, that you never put in a penny, but that you and Snelling split the money you got me to put in. Yes, it's all there in black and white. You warned me of the danger of putting things on paper, Carp, and I'll say you were right."

Carp was so incensed at Bloom and Armstrong and everything that for once he could find absolutely nothing to say. This entirely unexpected turn of affairs was an unmerited outrage, especially as he had seen Bloom only that day and satisfactorily arranged the little matter which had called forth the letter. He had kept the letter of necessity, because at the worst it contained material for a charge of blackmail. Bloom had been very wroth over the fancied grievance and, forgetting habitual caution, had let himself go.

IT was a necessary letter to retain; the last one for Armstrong to see. It was shameful how a lifetime's caution and cleverness could be wrecked in a moment by a combination of trifling circumstances. If the night hadn't been so unseasonably warm, if he hadn't taken off his coat, if he had locked the letter away as he meant to, if Doctor Willing's startling news hadn't driven it from his mind——

"And while whining about the poorhouse, it seems you own a block of property in New York, to say nothing of other investments," Armstrong was saying. He seemed to have recovered his self-control, to be able even to see the mordant humor of the situation, for he laughed suddenly. "I'm pretty near bust to the blue, while you're worth a fortune. From manager of a third-rate traveling show, you've become a plutocrat, all in a few years.

"And I'm the one who really earned it!" he went on. "It's funny, Carp. Managing seems to pay better than producing. Yes, of course I spent my share like a fool while you saved and invested yours; I've no kick coming about that. But, not content with grabbing the biggest share, you robbed me of most of mine. That's what I can't understand. An ordinary crook or burglar is human. I guess it's got to be a disease with you and you want to grab all the money in the world, eh? It must be something like that."

Carp said nothing; he was too busy thinking. The thought of having to release Armstrong from his contract, sacrifice the profit it represented, was torture, yet that wasn't the least of what confronted him. That letter, if properly used, would lead to jail; for even though they had composed their quarrel, Bloom would squeal if it came to a case of saving his own skin. That letter was the only evidence against them and if he could get possession of it even for a few minutes—— No doubt this dumb-bell didn't know its real value.

"Of course that letter ain't worth the paper its wrote on," he said, with a contemptuous laugh. "Any boob could tell you that. You make me tired, Babe; honest, you're dumber than a dumbwaiter. D'you think the reputation of a man like me depends on what any guy may care to say about him? Say, you've a whole lot to learn! I tell

you there ain't a word of truth in what Bloom says, and you'll find that out quick enough when you try to prove it up. You'll only make a monkey of yourself, and I'll sue you the limit for breach of contract and deformation of character. Yes, deformation of character! I'll break you, for you ain't gotta leg to stand on."

"I'll take the district attorney's opinion on that," said Armstrong quietly. "I guess I've got enough right here in my pocket to send you and Bloom and Snelling where you belong. If that letter doesn't prove anything, it shows at least where to get the proof. I guess there'll be no great difficulty finding all I want."

"You got another guess coming," said Carp. "Lemme see that letter a minute. I'll show you where Bloom proves himself a liar."

"You'll show me nothing. I know what's in that letter, so do you, and it's all right where it is. Something might happen to it, Carp."

"I don't know what you mean," said Carp, in virtuous astonishment, while cursing mentally. "You're certainly clean off your rocker. Go ahead then and believe anything and do anything you like; *I* don't care a tinker's dam'. I'm offa you for life and I got nothing more to say."

But, raging inwardly, there was still a good deal that he meant to say. He had failed to secure the letter by guile; he dare not risk personal combat; and so he must come to terms. Far better to release Armstrong from the contract than to have his multifarious and complex affairs investigated by the law. More might be uncovered than even Armstrong suspected. And, after all, this dumb-bell was imposing far more lenient terms than he had the power to exact. Of course it would never do to let him see that.

Carp's thoughts and the long silence were shattered suddenly by a sharp report and the car, after a slight swerve, came to a stop as Armstrong mechanically threw out the clutch and clapped home the brakes.

"Damn!" said Armstrong casually. "And I blew the last spare coming from Princeton that night. This looks like a job of work."

CHAPTER IX.

IN A RED MIST.

IT proved indeed to be a "job of work," Armstrong being none too expert at affixing a patch, while he received absolutely no help from Carp, who claimed that his knowledge of motoring did not extend to running repairs. Whether this ignorance was genuine or not it came in very handy; he stood around smoking a cigar while Armstrong jacked up the wheel and, having removed the shoe, brought the damaged tire round to the glare of the headlights. They were about a mile to the south of South Amboy, on a road which at that hour was absolutely deserted.

It has been said that a poet has died in the heart of every man, but it might be added with greater truth that so also has a murderer. Man being what he is, the impulse to kill is far more common than the impulse to write odes. Abolishing the deterring factor of detection and punishment, how many among us would be free from the brand of Cain? Given the time, the place, the opportunity—— The thought seemed to take shape in Carp's mind with the feel of one of the heavy tire irons that Armstrong had discarded. He looked at the other, sitting cross-legged in the road with his back to him.

The light from one of the lamps struck obliquely on that puckered scar bisecting Armstrong's cheek. At the end of that scar, up under the cap and hair, was a spot that a single blow from this weapon would break like so much parchment. A single well-aimed

blow and this troublesome, hateful individual, so seemingly strong, would be removed forever.

It was a fascinating thought, the more fascinating as one dallied with it, and Carp became aware that it had been lying dormant in his mind for some time. Of course it was absurd, wholly unnecessary. It wasn't as if Armstrong were demanding impossible terms, had forced him into a corner from which there was no escape. Yes, a ridiculous idea, but there was no harm considering it just for fun.

Supposing it were an accomplished fact, what risk was there? Everybody knew that Babe Armstrong was out in Indiana; nobody knew that he, Carp, was here in New Jersey. The Forgans, Doctor Willing, everybody around Milton Center, knew him as "Jones," knew Armstrong as "Stewart." Nobody, not even Anne Forgan, knew that he had left in company with Armstrong. They had met nobody who could say they were together.

NOW they were absolutely alone, and a mile distant was a bridge spanning the Raritan River. They must cross that bridge. If a man was found drowned—or he might be carried out into the bay and never found. And the head injury would be laid to the account of passing boats. How often has it not? And who was there to identify the remains, even supposing they were recognizable? And though Armstrong's death wasn't necessary, if he was out of the way that Forgan girl—— But, of course, it was an absurd idea and he'd better be putting this tire iron back where it belonged.

Instead of doing so, however, Carp slipped it into the pocket of the light overcoat he wore. Armstrong would need it again and he would have it handy. Then he went and stood over the other, his eyes fixed in fascination on that foreshortened puckered scar.

"Well, Babe," he said at length, breaking the long silence, "have you changed your mind about what we were talking of? You've had time to mull it over."

"I've changed nothing." Armstrong's solitary efforts had not improved his patience, nor his opinion of Joseph Carp. He shot the words over his shoulder. "I won't be changing it, either."

"Well, all right, then. If you've got your back up and want your release, I'll give it." Carp said this with an air of great magnanimity. "You ain't forcing me, understand, or anything like that. Not a-tall. I'm making you a present of it, see? If you feel this way about me, if you believe all them lies simply on the say-so of a jobbie like Sol Bloom, then the sooner you and me part the better. It's hard after all these years we been together and all I done for you, treating you like a brother. I brung you up, I made you what——"

He paused, as though overcome by emotion, and awaited a softening reply. But none came. Armstrong, the puncture mended, was dusting powder into the shoe.

"I ain't gonna make the trouble for you I could," resumed Carp, in the same highly magnanimous strain. "That ain't my style. You'll live to see the wrong you done me, Babe. Meanwhile I make you a present of your release I'll give you my copy of the contract and you gimme that letter of Bloom's. I wanta ram it down his lying throat And then, of course, you gotta fix up about laying low until we get Slade shifted. But I don't see why mebbe he couldn't finish the season; we might as well have the coin and it'll be hard thinking up a proper excuse for breaking the contract. We don't wanta be sued."

Armstrong arose and faced him.

"You needn't worry about fixing up

an excuse, and I won't be lying low either. I'm going to own up to this fraud."

"You're what?"

"That's what I said. If I'm going to play this fight game as I think it ought to be played, I've got to start clean. You and Slade needn't be afraid; I'll take all the blame. And, if they give me time, I'll pay back my share of what we've got by this skin game. You'll have to pay yours, of course."

Carp's face shone livid in the moonlight.

"You're crazy!" he snarled. "If you wanta ruin yourself, you've got no right to ruin me! Where do you think I get off in this damn-fool play, huh?"

"I've told you I'll take all the blame. Didn't you say you could claim the whole idea was mine and that you were only a tool? Well, claim it; I won't stop you. Make any excuse you like, square yourself any way you can. That's up to you. I intend to start clean and nothing you can say or do is going to stop me."

"They'll stick you in jail, you crazy dumb-bell!" Carp exploded and his body shook with rage.

"All right, I'll go to jail if that's the only way I can square it," replied Armstrong, and walked to the rear of the car where he began to put on the tire. "Where's that other iron?"

Carp made no reply and Armstrong, after a vain search, got a spanner from the tool box. Carp came and stood over him, right hand in his overcoat pocket. He was dealing with a madman; Armstrong had gone crazy, filled to the brim with a lot of highfaluting, sentimental tripe prompted by that Forgan girl. All this blah about playing the game and starting clean—the dumb-bell was in love with the hick jane. Sentimental love is nothing but a species of madness. It makes a man cuckoo enough for anything. Armstrong didn't care if he ruined himself, everybody, the whole world.

"There's something else you'll have to settle, too," said Armstrong, over his shoulder. "I won't ask you to pay back what you never put up on the bang-tails, because I might have lost most of it anyway, but you've got to return what you got me to invest in that snide oil company. You can fix it with Snelling any way you like."

INSTEAD of the clear moonlight, Carp was seeing a red mist. Not only must he refund his share of the lucrative theatrical venture, but he was now to lose a far greater sum. This unscrupulous raid on his sacred pocketbook was indeed the last straw, more than flesh and blood could be expected to stand.

"When I get that money you may have Bloom's letter," added Armstrong. "All the rest you've done me out of, you may keep. The fight game, as played by you, is certainly a rotten proposition, Carp, but I guess you couldn't play any game straight."

He turned, having finished pumping the tire and Carp struck. He had waited for the moment, weapon in hand, and his aim was true. The iron met the precise spot he had been contemplating for so long and Armstrong dropped as though shot through the heart. It was all astonishingly easy.

Carp felt no remorse, only savage satisfaction. He expressed it by kicking the body of his victim. Armstrong showed no signs of life, nor was this to be wondered at; thanks to Doctor Willing's tip, that single blow was more than enough to kill him outright. But even should a flicker of the vital spark remain, water would soon quench it.

Carp was entirely cool and collected and his mind seemed to work automatically, as though everything had been carefully thought out long before. For

instance, it would be folly to weight the body; weights seldom or never hold and are a sure sign of murder. Nor could he furnish a weight that, to the skilled investigator, wouldn't afford a clew of some sort.

For the same reason he must avoid all signs of a studied attempt at destroying evidence of identification. Of course it was imperative to remove Bloom's letter and any intimate belongings, such as the suit case, that could be identified as Armstrong's, but as for removing coat lapels—no, that would only provoke inquiry, point to murder, instead of accident or suicide.

CARP weighted the suit case with stones and, after a careful, unhurried examination of Armstrong's pockets, lifted the body into the tonneau, placed it out of sight on the floor and resumed his journey. Yes, let the remains be found if need be. Nobody knew Armstrong had a scar like that, so how could they identify him? Besides, the great point was that he would be alive and kicking out in Indiana.

There was no need to tell Slade and Mullins anything about what had happened; he could say simply that Armstrong wasn't well enough to show and that Slade could finish the season. Slade would jump at the chance. And then—— Well, they hear nothing from Armstrong and he simply disappears. Nobody knows what has become of him.

"So there you are!" summed up Carp, to himself. "Just as easy as all that. We can't raise no hullabaloo over the dumb-bell's disappearance, because we'd be jailed for fraud and false pretenses. Slade and Mullins have gotta keep quiet. As time passes with still no word from Armstrong, we gotta believe that he's dead and that there's nothing for it but to keep Slade on the job. There ain't no reason why he couldn't take the ring in a year mebbe; he might develop into a champ if he was properly handled and matched.

"I could nurse him along, picking soft stuff, and Mullins could learn him the Babe's style and tricks, especially that shift and the one-two. The fact that he was believed to be the champ would half win him any scrap before he started. Anyway, at the worst he can resign the title and nobody'll ever know he ain't Armstrong. But I don't see why I couldn't make a better, bigger Babe of him, more popular and paying than that dumb-bell I just bumped off. There ain't nothing you can't do if you've got ideas."

Carp, glancing at the sky, slowed to a three-mile-an-hour crawl as the scattered lights of South Amboy drew near; a big bank of cumulus was stealing up on the moon like a foe from ambush, would soon obliterate it. He could do without unnecessary light. Yes, he was a man with ideas. It was particularly pleasing to reflect that, even in the remote contingency of Mullins and Slade suspecting this night's work, he knew that which would place them behind the bars.

There were certain secret unsavory incidents in the pasts of both and, as he had informed Slade, it was his business to know such things. It was always wise to probe patiently a man's past; you never knew what you might uncover even in what appeared to be the most spotless record. Judging the intimate personal histories of others by his own, Carp had long since found it a lucrative practice. In Mullins' case, it had enabled him to acquire a first-class trainer at a second-class price. Among his other accomplishments, Joseph Carp numbered the art of polite blackmail.

The sky was quite dark when he reached the bridge, halted midway and switched off the lights. He got out and waited. If any stray wayfarer happened along, he could make the pretense of a blown fuse.

He walked toward Perth Amboy, returned to the car. The bridge was clear. To the east a freight on the C. R. R. rattled past and the lights of Tottenville and the ragged Staten Island shore seemed to be watching him like yellow eyes. The red-and-green lights of a vessel showed from the end of Arthur Kill, but it was going, not coming, and there was no other sign of shipping except far out in the bay.

Thus assured, Carp proceeded to carry out the rest of his program. He waited, hanging over the bridge, to hear far below the splash of his released burdens. The suit case would sink to the bottom and stay there until rotted beyond recognition, and the tide would carry the other out, perhaps into the lower bay. But it mattered little what ultimately became of it. His final act was to drop the red-stained tire iron.

THE next thing to think about was the car; here again his mind seemed to have arranged everything long before. He was in no doubt as to what should be done, and he set out for Jersey City. Impossible to leave the auto for some one to find; it was of a distinctive type and probably better known around New Jersey and Manhattan than Armstrong himself. It was equally dangerous to try and destroy it.

Besides, it represented a good bit of money which it would pain him exceedingly to lose. Boldness was the best course, and what was the good of knowing people if you didn't use them? Besides there was no risk. Wasn't Armstrong out in Indiana?

Noon of that same day found Carp across the State line, and at Stamford he stopped at a garage owned and operated by a former crony whom he had not seen for some time.

"Yeah, the Babe's playing South Bend and drawing like a mustard plaster," he said, over a friendly glass. "Making a real name as an actor, like you seen in the papers. Maguire? Well, I'll talk about that hunk of cheese later. I got a real bargain for you, Jake. This here bus of mine, which set me back over five grand, has sprung a leak or something. I run into a dray about a coupla miles back and lost even the license plate. She ain't reely hurt much, as you can see, and I meant to tool her out to South Bend with my own fair hand.

"But that accident gimme a scare and I'm offa her for life. I guess trains is safer, and this is my first and last appearance as a transcontinental speedster. The joke's on me; I'm offa her and you can have the boat for a coupla grand. I'm willing to let you have her at that figger for a quick sale and because you're an old friend of mine. *What! Fifteen hundred?* Say, that's highway robbery! No wonder you guys in this business is all millionaires. Yeah, I know she'll have to be repainted, but she cost——"

So, following some proper haggling, the bargain was made. Repainted, a different license, sold to somebody in Connecticut—who could ever connect it with Armstrong?

Carp's next move was to compose the following letter, which he dated and posted in Boston:

DEAR MISS FORGAN: Just a line to apologize for that break I made. I didn't mean to insult you and wouldn't for the world. I wasn't myself that night. Stewart had a bottle of liquor—he must have smuggled it in—and I was foolish enough to take a couple of drinks with him in his room. He insisted on me having some, he was in a bad humer, and I took some to quiet him. I'm not used to liquor and it went right to my head, set me off so bad that I didn't reelly know what I was doing. I guess I must have acted like a wild man, now that I come to think of it.

Would say that Stewart done it on purpose, knowing what I thought of you and that it would get me in wrong. I told him so, and that he was no friend of mine. I felt so bad about it that I had to leave like I did. I thought it was the best thing to do. Stewart wouldn't give me a lift to the station in

his car, and I wouldn't have taken it from him, anyway. So I had to walk to Red Bank. But I didn't have to wait for the milk train; I was lucky enough to meet a man in an automobile who was going to Jersey City, and I dickered with him for a lift.

I want to warn you about Stewart, and you don't want to let him stay at Highview Farm a day longer. He was fit to travel long ago, and he has only been playing it on you. I don't see why I should shield him any more after the low trick he played me about the liquor. The truth is he's a bad egg, especially with women. Ask anybody who knows him.

It's not true that what I said about him being such a help in his uncle's business; he does nothing but booze and run around. He has always some new one, and sooner or later he'll make some excuse and light out and you'll never see him again. He couldn't be true to nobody. I'm warning you as a friend, Miss Forgan.

Would say I'm on a business trip and don't know when I'll be down your way again. But I hope you'll accept my apology and explanation and give me a chance to square myself. I'm through with Stewart, and I've had my first and last taste of the demon rum. Stewart would like to see it make me what it's made him.

That you will heed my warning and forgive my solitary drunken lapse is the heartfelt wish of your sincere friend and admirer,

ROBERT C. JONES.

Carp wrote and signed this in a carefully disguised hand. He was proud of the production. It mattered little whether the hick jane believed what he had said about the dumb-bell; the point was that it gave him a legitimate excuse to furnish an alibi. A man with ideas measured all circumstances.

It could be shown perhaps that no passenger had boarded a northbound train near that neighborhood or hour, but it couldn't be proved that he didn't get a lift. Nor could he be expected to identify the motorist with whom he had bargained. And the letter, while showing that he knew nothing of Armstrong's leaving Highview Farm, prepared Miss Forgan for that happening and Armstrong's continued absence. It also opened the way for further acquaintance with her.

She was certainly attractive, had appealed strongly to Carp in a sense from the first and, now that the dumb-bell was out of the way, there was no reason why ultimately they shouldn't become good pals. A girl like that, with little money and experience and nobody to look after her, needed a gentleman friend. And in a few months, by the time he saw her again, she would have forgotten or forgiven that little break of his.

Carp, however, did not know quite so much as he thought. He might have been considerably less pleased with the execution of his scheme had he but known that the boat seen at the end of Arthur Kill was not the only one in the vicinity.

CHAPTER X.

READY FOR BATTLE.

SOME time later, Babe Armstrong awoke amid unfamiliar surroundings and a most unpleasant smell, a mixture of tar, bilge water, vitiated air and the ghosts of boiled salt dinners. His head was splitting and, for a time, he thought the oscillation of the room part of his fevered dream. He sensed again the shock of cold water, of coming up from a bottomless pit of eternal darkness, rough voices, a hand on his collar. But the connection, the reality of it all, eluded him.

He lay with wide-open eyes, trying to piece the past together, and discovered presently that what he took to be the swaying ceiling was the sagging mattress of a bed. He was in a lower bunk, the forecastle of a ship, a ship at sea. A swinging lamp burned dimly and evilly and there came a faint *thud-thud* that seemed to be an echo of the trip hammer beating inside his head. It was the thud of an engine. He was aboard a steamship at sea, being carried he knew not where.

He started up in sudden panic.

"Hey, stop her! Let me off!"

"Shut up or I'll bash your bloomin' top lights in!" came a voice from across the room.

"Let me off! I don't belong here! I want to get out of this!"

A heavy boot came whizzing over and crashed against the bulkhead. Another followed.

"Stow that row and let a beggar sleep! If I come down to ye——"

"But I tell you——"

Slam! Bam! Crash! A fusillade of missiles seemed to arrive from all quarters. They were accompanied by as many oaths and imprecations in a variety of voices. There appeared to be a unanimous vote against him and Armstrong's fighting blood was instantly up in flame. He struggled to arise, but a sudden wave of nausea swamped him and he fell back. The ship had begun to pitch vilely in a heavy head sea and he was deathly sick.

As his groans continued, epithets and an occasional missile continued to assail him; but finally they died down and he was bombarded with nothing worse than snores and the maddening *thud-thud-thud* of the distant engines. The lamp was put out and he lay half conscious. He thought he had sampled most of the unlovely experiences of life, but in that swaying darkness he seemed to have reached the nethermost pit of hell. He felt very sorry for himself and cursed Carp for not having finished him.

After years of this torture he heard somewhere overhead a bell strike four times and the room awoke to growling, cursing life. Men were coming in, others going out, and the newcomers brought with them a whiff of sharp clean air. He called hoarsely for water and somebody, knuckling the sleep from his swollen eyes, paused long enough to jam the pillow over his face.

It was removed by one of the newcomers, a scrubby little man in a streaming sou'wester, whom a red-haired giant sent spinning with a casual backhand cuff before lumbering from the room. The scrubby man gave him a drink of water and Armstrong fell into troubled sleep.

HE awoke again as the ship's bell struck eight times. He had a roaring headache and felt limp as a rag, but the worst of the nausea had passed. The night's events seemed like an evil dream, but were confirmed by what he now saw. The morning watch had come in, headed by the red-haired giant, and others were tumbling out.

They were a hard-boiled crew, as revealed by the murky light. As he sat up in his bunk, they eyed him curiously, suspiciously; some with open hostility, as animals eye an intruder. They might suddenly fall upon and rend him, or hail him as friend, either with equal reason.

The scrubby man broke the long silence. He had bandy legs and a face like melted cheese. He edged over, after glancing at "Redhead," who was eating with his fingers from a pannikin, and said with a strong Scotch accent:

"Weel, lad, hoo are ye feeling the noo?"

"Pretty bum, thanks," said Armstrong, with a feeble smile. "Say, where am I, anyway?"

"Aboard the guid ship *Balmoral Castle,* oot o' Glesca."

"We're abaht thirty miles east of Fire Island Light," added a cockney voice. "Next stop—the Clyde!"

"Jerusalem!" exclaimed Armstrong. "Say, this won't do for me. I've got to get off. I don't want to go to Scotland."

"You've got the right idea, son," said Redhead, glancing up from his pannikin. "It's a rotten place. It can't produce nothin' better nor a louse like you." He thumbed at the bandy-legged little man. "Ain't that so, 'Haggis?' "

"Weel, it's no for me tae boast," replied the other. "At ony rate, it couldna' produce nae worse than the likes o' you."

"You bet it couldn't! It takes a real country to do that." Then, as a smothered titter went round, he went on: "Hey, what did you mean? If I ever take a hand serious to you, Haggis, you dirty snivelin' weevil—— Just look at him! There's a braw Highland laddie for you. Wouldn't he show fine in kilts? They've all got them wee bandy legs. And for why? Because the Irish kept chasin' them up among the rocks. Ain't that so, Haggis?"

"I want to get off," repeated Armstrong, trying to make his point.

"Sure you do!" said Redhead. "We all do, except Haggis. He ain't used to nothing better. It's a rotten tub and a rottener afterguard, but nothin' else ever come down the Clyde. Ain't that so, Haggis? Well, now, son, you run along and tell the 'Old Man' and the 'First' to let you out at the next station. Present our compliments and say if he don't particularly mind, we'll be getting out, too."

"He'll put abaht and drop us in the 'arbor," said the cockney, an obese man with a remarkably ugly face. "And when you're at it, mate, you might as well tell 'im to wire ahead for rooms for us at the Ritz. Tell 'im particular that I tykes my bawth 'ot, with plenty o' rum and sugar."

"What's the joke?" said Armstrong, to the circle of grinning faces. "Why shouldn't he let me off? Have I been shanghaied aboard this hooker? He's got to put me off somewhere. If he doesn't, I'll make it hot for him."

"Well spoke, me brave lad!" exclaimed Redhead. "It's time somebody made it hot for him, seeing that the old bloke refuses to die. And who might you be—Uncle Sam's eldest son?"

"Me? I'm the middleweight champion of the world—Babe Armstrong."

There was silence, a craning of necks, stares. Then Redhead laid aside his pannikin, wiped a mammoth bloodshot hand carefully on his trousers, arose impressively and held it out.

"This is an honor, Mr. Armstrong," he said. "Pleased to meet you. Allow me to introjuce meself—Jack Dempsey, the new heavyweight champeen. Haggis is really Benny Leonard, slightly disguised—we're having a little masquerade—and you've recognized Bombardier Wells from his Oxford accent.

"Carpenteer is over there in the corner hunting a flea," he went on. "Joe Beckett is reading the dictionary in his bunk—laying down being his most natural position. We're all here, a international bunch of fistic talent. This is our private yacht and we're off for a cruise amid the sparkling waters of the Rocky Mountains. You joined the merry company sort of informal and unexpected, Mr. Armstrong, but your welcome is none the less hearty. Welcome indeed to our floating palace of joy!"

This lengthy sally was hailed with the greatest delight by the audience, Armstrong himself joining in the laughter. Redhead's gestures were funny, his accent impossible to reproduce; the foundation was Irish, but on it was superimposed several others, the tongue of a world rover.

APART from his unconventional appearance just then, it must be admitted that Armstrong, as he sat there on the edge of his bunk, looked anything but the middleweight champion pugilist of the world. His wet clothes had been removed and he was arrayed in an abbreviated outsize garment, probably Redhead's, that hid his splendid torso and exposed his attenuated shanks.

Like the late Fitzsimmons, Armstrong was something of a physical

freak. His fighting weight was one hundred and fifty-six pounds. Dressed for the street, he would have passed for a heavyweight, while, sitting there, he looked a lightweight. Moreover, he had none of the earmarks of the conventional "pug" and he was very young to bear the title he did. In that company he looked a particularly tender lamb fallen among wolves. Many an opponent had thought the same, to his sorrow.

"I'm not kidding," he said mildly. "I really am Armstrong. I've got papers to prove it." He reached over for his still damp clothes and, as his legs became thus fully revealed, there were nudges and derisive smiles.

"How do you get around on them splinters?" asked Redhead furiously, making a telescope of his hands. "They're even sketchier nor yours, ain't they, Haggis? Ain't you sort of shrunk, son, since you won the title?"

"Nah, not 'im," said the cockney. "'E was always like that. That's 'ow 'e wins—because the other cove carn't see 'im. Wot! You don't mean to sye you carn't find them pypers, Mr. Armstrong?"

"I've been robbed!" declared Armstrong, finishing his futile search. "Skinned clean—watch, money, everything!"

"Mebbe the Old Man kept 'em," suggested Redhead. "He's Scotch, and they keep more nor the Sawbbath, don't they, Haggis?"

"No, I've been cleaned out——" Armstrong's eyes were speculative. "How did I get aboard here? I don't remember anything about it."

"You're a ruddy government spy and I guess the boys bashed you one," volunteered a voice.

"Spy?" Armstrong stared.

"One of these here blasted pussyfooters, agents of the internal revenue," said Redhead. "No? Well, it don't matter. Anyway, you'll learn soon enough, if you don't know it, that we've just run a cargo of rum. Aye, the number of cases would make your mouth water. I hated to see them go."

Armstrong's eyes grew wider. So this was the sort of thing he had read about and hardly believed, the beginning of that long evasion and defiance of the new prohibition regulations.

"All we know," proceeded Redhead, "is what the shore gang told us. You know they come out and meet us in a fast motor boat. Well, they said you took a header into the river. They'd run a load and were laying under the bridge when something come flop into the water. It was you. They didn't care to leave you to drown; they daren't land you; so you was dumped here. But you know how you come there better nor we do."

Armstrong had decided to say nothing about Carp. He had revealed his identity because he intended owning to the fraudulent impersonation in any case, but this was not the time or place to speak of the other matter. Though he remembered nothing after Carp struck him, he could imagine the succeeding events.

"Mebbe you meant to suicide, eh?" added Redhead. "And you was knocked silly by hitting your head against something in the river. Or mebbe you're a government man and fell over when spying on the motor boat?"

"Neither one nor the other," replied Armstrong. "I was held up by a footpad while crossing the bridge, knocked on the head and thrown over. That explains my being robbed. And I'm Babe Armstrong, I tell you."

"Oh, sure you are," agreed Redhead. "Anybody'd know it just to look at you, especially them legs."

"I tell you I am."

"Aw, dry up!" said Redhead, suddenly losing patience. "Ain't you got no sense of humor? We don't give a

curse who you are, but that joke's played out. It ain't funny no more and I'm fed up with it. Think of something else."

"Wot do you tyke us for anyway?" chimed in the cockney, who, besides much flesh, possessed ginger hair and a wall eye. "If you're Armstrong, put up your dukes. I'll go a rahnd with you. Put 'em up."

"Aye, that's the ticket," approved Redhead. "'Limehouse' is only a lightweight—above the neck. He's a real member of the fancy—used to wash Joe Beckett's dog, didn't you, Limehouse? Clear a space, boys!"

"You needn't mind," said Armstrong. "I'm in no condition to box, and it wouldn't prove anything, anyway. I don't want to fight; I want some breakfast and to be put ashore."

"'Ark to 'im!" said Limehouse admiringly. "Ain't 'e a fair corf drop? Nah, then, 'Percy Wildflower,' put up or shut up. Babe Armstrong! Garn, I could murder yer with one 'and. Why, you barmy young toff, as if we didn't know, too, that Armstrong was awye out West! Yus, it was in the pypers that come aboard larst night. Wot have yer to sye abaht that?"

"A whole lot. The papers are wrong. That's only an understudy."

"A wot?"

"A person that takes my place, doubles for me. All star actors have them. I was sick and couldn't show——" He was interrupted by a howl of derisive laughter, and somebody in the background flung an ancient orange that burst near his head.

In former days Armstrong's reply ere this would have been to wade into his tormenters, nor was it his physical ill feeling that now restrained him. Sick or well he had never shirked a fight against odds. That was his nature; first and foremost he was a fighter, a slashing two-handed fighter, and on this had been superimposed the rare skill that made him what he was, at the age he was.

All that Anne Forgan had said concerning present-day boxing champions, however, what they might be and what they were not, had taken firm root in his mind. He was looking at his profession from a new angle.

"I'm telling you no more than the truth," he said patiently. "It may be pretty hard to believe, but I'll prove it when I get ashore. I'm Babe Armstrong——"

"Aw!" protested Redhead. "Ain't I told you, Percy, that that joke's napoo? I don't tell a man twice." So casually that Armstrong did not suspect what was coming, he set the heel of his palm in the other's face and sent him hurtling backward into his bunk.

THERE is a limit even to a fixed idea in a none-too-brilliant mind. Armstrong forgot all about being a shining example in deportment and morals to his fellow man. He rebounded from the back of the bunk, spouting angry words as he came.

According to the popular idea, Armstrong should have vanquished his much bigger but amateur opponent with a few crashing blows, thus becoming cock of the forecastle and idol of the hard-boiled crew. But nothing was further from the fact. There is a vast difference between a rough-and-tumble fight, where everything "goes," and one staged in the squared circle; and there are plenty of men who, at the former, could take the measure of the best heavyweight who ever entered the ring.

Armstrong was outweighed by almost fifty pounds and, in that confined space, admitting of no footwork, and in that class of encounter, this handicap alone was tremendous. "The bigger they are, the harder they fall." Yes, but you've got to hit them.

Armstrong's legs, ideal for a boxer, were not an asset to a wrestler. Above

all, he was out of condition, physically and mentally far below his usual form. The quickness of brain and muscle, their perfect coördination, were gone and, instead of being the old fighting machine of ice, he had lost his temper. Witness the remarks addressed to his antagonist, something he never indulged in. Lastly, Redhead had all the advantage of the light, and he was on his feet, ready and waiting.

All these handicaps proved insuperable and Armstrong made a very poor showing indeed, hardly better than the rawest amateur. His famous shift and one-two punch failed to work, and he never had another chance. Redhead pinned him in a huge embrace, wrestled him, back-heeled him expertly, flung him on the bunk and cuffed him soundly.

There came a string of oaths and the bellowing demand of "What's going on here?" and Armstrong arose to confront the first officer, who had burst through the throng like a bombshell, hitting both right and left with great gusto.

He was a lumpy-shouldered man, squat and powerful. His eyes were small, bloodshot and wicked, and he had the ears and head of a bobcat. Redhead glowered at him as he explained surlily that they were only having a bit of fun.

The First proved to have a fine command of unprintable language. He pointed out that the *Balmoral Castle* wasn't a floating home of mirth and rest, and then he went on to dwell on the defects of the crew, individually and collectively.

"Turn out, you dock wallopers, and get down to it!" he finished. "Hop it, or I'll bash some ginger into yeh!"

He turned to Armstrong and impaled him on the cruel little eyes.

"Step aft, you! The captain wants to see you. One of you swabs loan him some slops. Hop it now!"

CHAPTER XI.

"HOP TO IT!"

AFTER five minutes' conversation with Captain Jebb in the small saloon, Armstrong's idea of carrying matters with a high hand began to evaporate somewhat. It was more a monologue on his part than conversation, the captain contenting himself with "Aye?" or "Ye don't tell me now!" between capacious mouthfuls of oatmeal, finnan haddie, bacon and eggs.

Whatever the menu of the forecastle, the afterguard did itself well. Jebb had a pair of sanctimonious whiskers, and a watery boiled blue eye. He looked very gentle and harmless and his voice was meek, almost apologetic. Armstrong had not been asked to sit down, much less partake of the feast. He was hungry, sore, miserable, and he looked as ludicrous in the borrowed clothes as he felt.

"And so I want to be put ashore," he said, finishing the account he had given the forecastle. "Atlantic City will do—anywhere."

"Aye?" said Jebb, concentrating on the last egg. "A verra interesting story that, young mon. Whaur did ye read it?"

"What? Do you mean to say——"

"Noo, noo, dinna fash yoursel'! I'll no say ye read it. I canna imagine it being accepted by ony editor body, though they do publish muckle trash these days. Ye maun have seen it in the movies; they'll tak' onything, I hear."

"I tell you it's the truth!" exclaimed Armstrong. "What right have you to say it isn't?"

"Because I'm no daft, laddie. The middleweight champion—and a fo'c's'le swab smacks ye like a bairn! Hoots! Nor is that a' by a long chalk."

The captain drew a folded newspaper from under his knee and threw it on the soiled tablecloth.

"I canna believe," he said, "even in these days o' quick travel, that a mon can jump from Indiana to New Jersey in that time. Na, na!"

"I've explained that I never was in Indiana. I've told you that another man who resembles me is taking my place."

"Aye? And if I send a radio, it can be verra easily verified, o' course?"

"No, it couldn't. Nobody knows about it but my manager, my trainer and this substitute."

"Ye don't tell me now! A very reprehensible performance, Mr. Airmstrong. A downright swindle, ye micht say?"

"Yes, a rank fraud. I want to admit it publicly and take whatever punishment is coming. And so you see it wouldn't even be any use wiring my manager and the two others, because they wouldn't admit it. But I'm going to make them."

"Aye?" Captain Jebb shook his head and applied himself to the marmalade. "But surely ye have some papers—onything—showing your identity? Of what use would letters and such be to a footpad? Ye see my point, Mr. Airmstrong? And what were ye doing on yon bridge alone at that hour? Ye see?"

"I can explain all that. I've got to tell you what I didn't want to say until I got ashore. You see, my manager ——" And he proceeded to relate briefly all that had happened.

"Aye? Weel, weel! Ye don't tell me now!" punctuated Jebb, still feeding the whiskers industriously. "Yon's a tale for you!"

"I left most of my ready money at Highview Farm for what I owed," concluded Armstrong. "Perhaps the men who brought me aboard here stole the rest, including my watch and things. But naturally Carp would remove all letters and papers, anything that would go to prove my identity."

"Aye, naiturally. And yon folk at Highview Farm can prove ye're Babe Airmstrong?"

"Why, no. I've explained, or thought I had, that they only knew me under a false name, the same as they knew my manager."

"Weel, weel! But yon paper o' yesterday evening says that Mr. Carp is out in Indiana."

"Yes, but don't you understand? Nobody knows he visited me under the name of Jones. Nobody but Mullins and Slade."

"Aye, I onderstand." Captain Jebb, having finished his repast at last, pushed away his plate and proceeded to fill an old brier with shag. "Weel, sir, seeing ye've no siller, ye'll ha' to work your passage."

A cold chill went through Armstrong.

"What do you mean?"

"Juist that, me laddie buck. I'm na comeesioned by the owners tae carry free freight. If your capacity for wark is half as guid as your capacity for invention, ye'll do fine."

"You don't believe me? Well——" Armstrong struck the table a bang. "If you think you can shanghai me like this, you're darned well mistaken! I demand to be set ashore or transferred to a homeward-bound ship. I'm an American citizen and you can't get away with anything like this."

"An Amurrican citizen." Captain Jebb's watery blue eye regarded him benevolently. "And hoo do I ken that? Onyway, ye're beyond the three-mile limit and, Amurrican or Hottentot, it's nae maitter. Ye're on the high seas and I'm maister o' this ship. I'll land ye in Timbuktu, me laddie buck, instead o' Glesca, if I like."

"You—you daren't!" stuttered Armstrong.

"Hoots!" said Jebb, and aimed the pipe at him. "Ye'd better look at this wi' some common sense, if ye've got ony. I didna' ask ye to come aboard

o' us and we'd no choice but tae keep you. I'm no on an expedeetion that can verra weel put up wi' a lot o' investigation, nor have I the time and coals to waste on such a story as yours. Ananias himself wad ha' been asheemed o' it. I dinna' care a dang who ye are, pussyfoot spy, would-be suicide, or juist a plain daft body. But here ye are and here ye're gang tae stay until we mak' the Clyde. And what's mair, ye're gang tae wark; black squad or foremast hand, tak' your choice."

Armstrong drew a long breath.

"I'll do nothing of the kind! Who do you think you are, anyway? You set me ashore at once or——" He paused, startled into silence by the sudden change in the other.

Captain Jebb had sprung to his feet with astonishing agility, all his mild benevolence gone. His face was purple, the sanctimonious whiskers bristling, and he proceeded to pour forth a stream of invective which, though curiously free from all blasphemy, surpassed even the recent efforts of the first officer. In the middle of it, without warning, he plucked a heavy cup from the table and hurled it at Armstrong's head. Armstrong barely escaped it with a quick duck and, at the crash of shattered delf, the burly form of the first officer entered the saloon.

Jebb was now livid with rage, but he had recovered something of his old manner.

"Mr. Morgan," he said, aiming the pipe at Armstrong, "ye'll tak' this danged swivel-eyed swipe and set him to wark."

"Very good, sir."

"See he gets some breakfast if he's had nane. Ye'll mind, Mr. Morgan, that he seems lacking in deescipline and the respect due his superior officers. Aye, and wi' no proper regard for the truth such as a true Christian should have. Aye, and he has a verra pronounced inclination for spending his days in sinfu' idleness. Ye'll endeavor, Mr. Morgan, to correct these blemishes in his character."

"Very good, sir," repeated Morgan, regarding Armstrong with a cold anticipatory eye. "Now then, you, hop it!"

"A moment," said Captain Jebb, waving the pipe. "The servant is worthy o' his hire and ye'll be paid the wages ye earn, me laddie buck. And if ye tak' my advice ye'll earn something ower your salt and mak' the best o' the situation. A rose by any other name would smell as sweet, so ye'll go down on the books as 'Byron.' Ye ken he had a grand imagination like yersel' and na morals tae speak of."

"Hop it!" barked Morgan, thumbing at the door.

Armstrong, after a moment's hesitation, obeyed.

THERE seemed to be nothing to do but take the captain's advice and make the best of the situation. In a week he would be in Glasgow, in touch with the American consul, and then he would make things scorch for Joe Carp and this shipload of pirates. He would show Captain Jebb what it meant to be an American, that if he defied the country's laws he couldn't do what he pleased with Uncle Sam's citizens.

By George, it would become an international case like the old Trent affair! It was not even a nobody who had suffered this outrage, but the middleweight champion of the world. It might lead to war. Jebb, that watery-eyed old goat, would get all that was coming to him——

"Shed them boots and get to work on that deck. Hop it!"

Armstrong, lost in visions of splendid retribution, had forgotten that Morgan was treading close on his heels. Several of the hands, including Haggis and Limehouse, were at work with brush and water, trousers rolled to their

knees, while a gentleman in a blue jersey, evidently the bos'n, was superintending their efforts at cleanliness.

"But, look here," said Armstrong, trying to preserve a dignified balance on the heaving deck, "I haven't had any grub and the captain said I was to have breakfast."

Morgan had a large square face the color of ripe cherry wood. It was as expressionless, even when exhorting at high pressure. His mouth was thin and wide and he had a trick of never appearing to look at one. His lumpy shoulders seemed to grow out of his flat head and his small close-set ears that were pointed at the top.

"He didn't say when you were to have it," he replied tonelessly, his pale, deep-set blue eyes looking past Armstrong at the tumbling sea. "You'll have it when you earn it. Go on, get down to it!"

"But I've had nothing to eat since early last night," protested Armstrong, "I'm empty as a drum and I've been sick, too. I don't mind working, but I'm not going to——"

Biff! He never saw it coming, and apparently Morgan's eyes hadn't shifted or his expression changed. It was a smashing right uppercut and it landed Armstrong on his back among the scrubbing brigade, where somebody gave him a kick for luck.

He was up in a moment, fighting mad, but here again he had something to learn, the difference between the prize ring and the deck of a small steamer in a heavy cross sea. Here was a floor to which his feet were totally unaccustomed, a rolling, pitching floor, never still for a moment, and slippery with water.

He could neither find nor keep his balance, time a punch or judge distance, and he was obsessed with the idea of guarding at all hazards the vulnerable spot of which Doctor Willing had spoken so solemnly. He slipped, ducked into a haymaker. They threw a bucket of sea water over him and carried him to his bunk.

He remained there all the forenoon, a prey to sickness of body and soul. A series of knock-outs! Within the last twenty-four hours he had been on the receiving end of more wallops than in all his ring career. The middleweight champion! Why, he was a ham, a punching bag for the rawest amateurs.

Carp had been right; he was through. He couldn't beat an egg. That automobile accident had put him on the skids. Carp had helped him along with the tire iron. His head was an aching boil, his stomach a void of misery. He had a glass head. He had lost his punch, his pep, his eye for distance, his speed. He had lost everything and he would never feel right again. He was a has-been, a used-to-was, blown up and gone blooey at the ripe age of twenty-one. He wished he was dead.

TOWARD noon he met and talked to the second officer—there was no third—and the bos'n. The second officer brought him some medicine from the captain's chest—there was no regular ship's surgeon and he had done a year's medical—and the bos'n a bowl of broth and some advice.

"Do what you're ordered," he said gruffly, "and don't lift a 'and. That's mutiny and an excuse for plain murder. Mind what I'm telling you, young un!"

Armstrong braced himself to meet the gibes and jeers of the crew as they came in, but, to his surprise, they seemed to be friendly, though the name bestowed by Jebb had got about, together with the story concerning Carp.

"You should have knowed better, Lord Byron," said Redhead, "than to backchat 'Hoppit.' Didn't we warn you about him and the Old Man? Both of 'em would as soon hit you with the funnel, and without warning, too. You

wasn't used to funnels in the prize ring, eh?"

Armstrong was feeling somewhat better, though still groggy.

"There's a whole lot I'm not used to," he said, "but before I quit this hooker I'll knock you and that red-faced gorilla into a cocked hat. I'll show you what you don't know about the fight game."

"Hear, hear!" applauded Redhead.

"I'm not right," added Armstrong. "But when I'm right, and I hit you, you'll stay put. It's your own funeral if you don't believe I'm the middle-weight champion."

Redhead laughed and clapped him on the shoulder with every show of good feeling.

"You're a game chicken! There's nought the matter with your nerve, lad. You stood up to me and Hoppit like a well-plucked un. It's shamed I am to cuff you like I done, but you was asking for it. Forget this crazy talk about being Babe Armstrong. You'll be feeling all right when you get your sea legs and a square meal intil you, and then you won't find me and my mates a bad sort, though we're no angels."

"I'll fight you when I'm right," said Armstrong, wagging his head. "I'll fight the lot of you. I'll fight you any way you like, too, once I learn how to stand on this darned moving staircase. You give me decent foot room, that's all I'll ask."

"Och, away!" guffawed Redhead, and thumped him again on the back. "Sure I'd never raise a hand serious to you, Lord Byron. Forget it."

CHAPTER XII.

A HARD-BOILED TRIO.

THE better, or worst, part of a week had passed and Armstrong had found his sea legs and many other things. Among them he found that the *Balmoral Castle* would be breaking a record if she raised Tory Island in a dozen days. More likely she would take a fortnight. He found also that, as Redhead had intimated, he and his mates weren't a half bad sort and that it would be absolutely useless to try and prove he was Babe Armstrong, though he still asserted the fact. Redhead pooh-poohed further invitations to personal combat, and the fo'c's'le regarded Armstrong as being mildly insane on the subject.

"They say we're all crazy on something," remarked Redhead. "For instance, there's you, Haggis; you think the Scotch are really human beings. And there's you, Limehouse; you think you're a lady-killer. So why shouldn't Byron think he's Babe Armstrong? He ain't bluffing or joking, like I thought. The truth is he's got a wee failure. He really believes he's Armstrong. You can see that."

"'E's quite barmy," Limehouse nodded. "I knowed a cove like that once. 'E was all right except on one subjeck. 'E thought 'e was Christopher Columbus. 'E got it from eating too many eggs."

"Aye," said Haggis, "from thinking a thing ye can come tae believe it. Armstrong's evidently the lad's hero and, from pretending to be him, he may ha' come to think he is. It's queer. You'd ha' thocht it wad ha' been knocked out of him by Hoppit. And then the way he come aboard us——"

"'E may have escaped from the asylum," suggested Limehouse. "Nobody but a lunatic would have shipped on this blarsted cockroach."

"Anyway, he's a good sort," summed up Redhead, "and I'll scrag the first blighter that don't give him a fair show."

Thus because he was supposed to have a "wee failure" and had suffered at the hands of First Mate Morgan, the common enemy, Armstrong was given his place in the forecastle which he

soon consolidated by his own personality. They still called him Byron and he came in for his share of the raw joshing and crude practical jokes, but he took it all in good part. And as time went on and he found his footing in this hard new world, he began to find a certain pleasure in it.

IF the food was plain there was plenty of it; if the work was hard, monotonous and even demeaning, it brought dreamless sleep. He breathed the sea air all day long, thankful he hadn't been relegated to the black squad, and he soon began to feel something like his old self. And if there were mean spirits among his shipmates, perhaps even criminals, there were also those like Redhead, Haggis and Limehouse.

This hard-boiled trio dominated the forecastle, but they were fundamentally sound when one got to know them. Rovers, adventurers who, in spite of their mutual gibes and recriminations, were old friends whose respective merits had been tested on many fields, including that of Flanders. They might insult, even assault, one another with impunity, but woe betide the outsider who mistook this for enmity. The foe of one was the foe of all.

Armstrong learned this as he learned that Redhead's name was Rannigan; that Haggis was really Dewar, and Limehouse, Bootle. But nothing and nobody received its or his proper cognomen. The ship itself was always called the "cockroach"—generally with an adjective prefixed—while Morgan's nickname, as may be inferred, came from his favorite phrase. Indeed he seemed incapable of saying anything without finishing with the command to hop it.

Curiously enough, while warning Armstrong about the first officer and advising him as to his future conduct, they held no murderous opinion regarding him such as he had read about in books. They were hard men, accustomed to hard knocks, and assuredly they had learned philosophy and toleration. They damned him heartily, but they also made allowances.

"You see it's like this," said Rannigan. "There's them that's born forocious and there's them that ain't. Always look out for a man with pointed lugs like that; it's a sure sign of the forocious tiger. And, mind you, the tiger's the only animal that kills for sport. He'll go on killing on a full belly.

"Hoppit can't help being borned with them ears, no more than Haggis can help being Scotch or Limehouse a picture of beauty. He ain't such a bad sort neither; he's a first-class sailorman and he done his bit in the show against Jerry. He's borned that way and all of us is borned some way. Me, I can't pass a pub, for I've got a periodic thirst that ain't human."

This attitude was all the more liberal in view of the fact that Morgan had opened Rannigan's head with a belaying pin on the outward voyage. Rannigan displayed the scar to Armstrong as a warning.

"What he can't do with his fists—and that ain't much—he'll do with anything that comes handy. And he's got a jaw like a lump o' flint. I near broke me knuckles on it. He'll hit you with anything he can lift."

"So'll the Old Man," Bootle nodded. "But 'e's different. 'E'd be orl right if only 'e'd get blind drunk and 'ave a good curse, not thwart 'isself like 'e does."

"Aye, if he'd go on a first-class bust like me," said Rannigan. He then explained that Captain Jebb, if never drunk, was never wholly sober except when ashore. He was a confirmed tippler at sea, and the amount he could consume, without showing it, aroused even Rannigan's envy and admiration.

"Being a Scotchman," said Rannigan, "he's too mean to get properly oiled. Ain't that so, Haggis? And then there's the handicap o' religion. Being a good blue Presbyterian, he can't bring himself to cuss like he ought, and no matter how mad he is you'll never hear him. He skates all round the pool o' blasphemy without ever falling in. It must be a terrible strain to find words that ain't really cusses, have all that stuff bottled up and not get it out proper. I'm minded of the story o' the wild cat, the reason he was so damn wild. You see——" And he launched out on a most indelicate narrative of unnatural history.

"As Limehouse says," he concluded, "old Jebb thwarts hisself. The result o' it all is that he's liable to blow up when least expected and lam you with anything. He knocked Haggis cold with a bottle—empty, o' course—first day out."

"Aye, that was the insulting pairt," said Dewar. "I wadna' ha' minded had it been fu'."

"We've all been knocked rahnd something crool," said Bootle. "'E knew we'd no chance to desert or tyke the lor of 'im. Well, live and learn. I'm off this blarsted cockroach when I drors me pay."

"I've shipped on many a worse and you have, too," said Rannigan. "But if I ever catches Hoppit and the Old Man down a dark alley and I got a pickax handy—— You see, Byron, mutiny's a bad thing, especially acrost the water. The courts are terrible strict and, whether you done it or not, the afterguard'll swear you started it. You're bound to come out the thin end and get a rousing spell in clink. I know, because I been through it."

"'Oo ain't?" challenged Bootle.

"According to the new laws of the Stars and Stripes," continued Rannigan, "we're criminals mebbe, but according to the laws o' the Red Duster, we ain't. There ain't nothing in this rum-running game that old Jebb can't square with his conscience; no, nor me either—if I had one. Good liquor's meant to be drunk, ain't it? And a man who has to be protected by law, against hisself, ain't worth protecting. That's the way I look at it. Besides, it ain't us that's breaking the law, but the bootleggers on your side that order and run the stuff. We couldn't do it without their help. However, it'll make a grand new lot o' millionaires as well as criminals—both mebbe meaning the same thing."

Armstrong then learned a good deal about the illicit liquor traffic which was growing to such gigantic proportions, and he heard export figures that were staggering. The *Balmoral Castle* was one of a fleet operated by a prominent British speculator who had sold stock in the enterprise to the general public, precisely as though it were listed on Change.

OF course, Rannigan and his two friends had no interest in it, outside their wages. Like the crew in general, it was mainly a case of taking their bread where they found it, providing it was buttered with variety and adventure. They thought no more of it than the gun running off the Russian coast, which they had also indulged in, at one time.

"It's 'ard to land a ruddy job of any kind," said Bootle. "You comes 'ome to blighty arter doing yer bit, and wot do yer find? Yer finds a bloomin' bob-'aired flapper filling yer plyce and no work to be 'ad. Lloyd George said it was to be a country for 'eroes to live in. S'welp me, it would tyke a 'ero to live in it."

"What I mean to say," summed up Rannigan, "is that though you might think us an illegal outfit, there's law and order and mighty strong backing behind Jebb. They don't know him

when he's afloat, and I'll bet he's a representative citizen and leads the psalm singing in church o' Sundays. And so I'm warning you, Byron, about giving a handle for a charge o' mutiny. But you'll have no more trouble if you keep a shut mouth and obey orders."

"But I didn't sign on for this trip," argued Armstrong. "I'm not an employee."

"Don't matter," said Rannigan. "You've got to work your passage and that makes you the same as any o' us. That's the way they look at it and you'll be treated as such. Take my advice now and don't go breeding trouble for yourself. You may do what you like when you're ashore, but here there ain't no law but Jebb's. He's the little tin god of this floating heaven."

Armstrong followed this advice which was no more than his own common sense dictated; there was no use kicking against the pricks or making his position harder than it was. After all it could have been infinitely worse; he might have been left to drown, refused sanctuary aboard the *Balmoral Castle*. And there was something to be said for Jebb. Indeed in the circumstances would any captain have believed his story and set him ashore? There is an end to all things and vindication would come when he reached Glasgow.

To be continued in the next issue of THE POPULAR, *on the news stands March 7th.*

WASHINGTON'S GREAT MAN

GIBBONEY C. MACVEAGH, one of the wildest baseball fans ever attached to Uncle Sam's pay roll, sat next to a man from Chicago at the deciding game of the last world's series. The Chicagoan, who described himself as a merchant on his first visit to Washington, displayed great interest when Mr. Coolidge entered the presidential box. He was particularly impressed when the two teams lined up in front of the president and the band played the "Star-spangled Banner."

"It's nice, isn't it," he confided to MacVeagh, "to see them so respectful to the president."

The game progressed toward its heart-breaking finish, and, when Walter Johnson strode forth from the shadows of his two recent defeats to make one more play for fame, the Chicagoan leaped to his feet, one of the wildest of the wild.

"Say!" he yelled to MacVeagh, giving him a mighty clump on the shoulder for emphasis. "If Walter wins now, he'll be a bigger man in Washington to-night than this president—what's his name?"

THE USUAL KIND

ONE afternoon, Mrs. Henry H. Halsit, one of the wits of the political set in Washington, was bored, annoyed and depressed at a tea by the wife of a cabinet member who detailed her trials and troubles with her hired help. Having finally exhausted the tale of her woes, she gloomily asked Mrs. Halsit:

"What kind of help have you now—colored?"

"Oh, yes!" Mrs. Halsit replied brightly. "Green."

McTavish the Spender

By A. M. Chisholm

Author of "When the Sea Gives Up Its Dead," "In Sheep's Clothing," Etc.

When a Scotchman spends his money, there is sure to be a safe investment around the corner. And so it was with "Scotty" McTavish when he generously bestowed his silver upon the rich Widow Doran's heathen charity.

"SOME men," said the old fisherman, clicking a parched tongue against equally dry lips suggestively, "is too mean to live. I've even knowed men as had money in their clothes and never thought of ordering a drink when others was suffering of thirst. It might be meanness or just forgetfulness—I ain't sayin' which—but a man to get along in this world has to be a philanthropist and have some feelings for others and do as he would be done by, as the Scripture says. Now you, being free with your money, nat'rally can't understand a man that ain't. You order up a drink and never think twice about it, and so do I. Shall I order now, or will you?"

"I insist on ordering," said the listener, in admiration of the bluff.

"Well, if you make a point of it, I'll let you do it this once," said the old fisherman, with elaborate reluctance. "Mine'll begin with a squeeze of lemon. I ain't feeling extra and have to take something soft. When you get along to my age, you'll have to be careful of yourself, too."

He imbibed the tonic slowly and set his glass down with a gentle sigh. Producing his pipe, he investigated the contents of the bowl with a careful finger, the length of whose disappearance showed a deplorable condition of emptiness. He shook his head and, placing the stem between his teeth drew on it sadly several times before beginning an unavailing search through his garments for tobacco. Slowly he delved into each pocket and, finding nothing, turned a reproachful eye on the listener.

"I reckon I must have left my plug

to home," he observed. "I get used to one sort of tobaccer and others hurts my tongue—that is, mostly. What sort do you smoke?"

The pouch was extended, and he was invited to try it.

"It looks mighty light-colored," said he, packing the tobacco tightly around the bowl. "Have you got a match, too? No, never mind—I can scratch it myself.

"Speaking of philanthropists reminds me of 'Scotty' McTavish. He was Scotch, as you might guess from the name, and he had other failings besides. He drifted into this town off a Dundee whaler a good many years ago and, being a first-class fisherman and handy with tools as well, it wasn't long before he began to make money faster than he could spend it, which ain't sayin' much. He lived by himself in a little shack down off the West docks, and had a little garden, where he grew potatoes and cabbage, but his steady fodder was oatmeal, raw and cooked, and a mix-up of odds and ends for a grand blow-out on a holiday. Altogether he lived about as cheap as a man can do and not show his frame through his clothes, but he didn't get thin more'n usual, and seemed quite contented and happy.

"I remember the first night he came to 'The Fisherman's Rest.' It was just after he landed, and we was all sitting around, as usual. The door opened, and a long, rawboned chap, with red whiskers, and one of these flat Scotch caps with a knob on top, walked in and up to the bar.

"'Hoo muckle will it cost for a wee drappie whusky?' says he, as close as I can say it.

"Dan Prentiss told him, and he laid down the money and tipped up the bottle until the glass was runnin' over, and it was a big glass, too, it bein' Dan's first experience with him. After that the glass was little and Dan used to do the pouring himself.

"'You ain't leavin' much room for water,' says he, eyin' the drink and then the bottle, to see how many of the same size it would hold.

"'Watter!' says Scotty, surprised-like. 'I will not be asking for watter, but for a drink.'

"'Ho!' says Dan, looking hard at his glass. 'It's my mistake, then; I thought it was a bath, and I wondered at that, you talkin' like a Scotchman.'

"'Mon,' says Scotty, 'but you're awfu' close wi' your licker. Ye telled me the price, and I gied ye the siller. The whusky is paid for.'

"'Part of it is,' says Dan, 'and the rest you get free, but by your looks it won't strangle you on that account.'

"Scotty licked up the glass in two gulps and set it back on the bar.

"'It's a verra mild speerit,' says he, 'an' not at a' what ye might ca' undiluted. I doubt ye make a fine profit on it, Mr. Landlord.'

"'I do so,' says Dan. 'I get it given to me and then I water it; then I strain the water and sell it, and that's what you had. It's a shame to do it,' he says, very sarcastic, 'but, bein' Scotch, it don't hurt my feelin's.'

"But Scotty only shook his head. 'It's a verra weak speerit,' says he again, and went out leavin' Dan sore as a boil.

"'A Scotchman,' says he to us, 'gets his insides that lined with oatmeal no licker can hit 'em. Wot he had was 'way over proof, but wot he wanted was sulphuric acid and a carbolic chaser. Five fingers clear in a flat-bottom glass and calls it a mild spirit!'

"He closed the bar early that night, arter trying to charge Steve Curry ten cents for a glass of rum and milk, which Steve wouldn't pay.

"'Five cents always was the rule of this house for drinks to regular customers,' he says, 'and if they've gone up here, I know places where they haven't. I may be a drinker and a hor-

rible example,' he says, 'but I ain't a sucker.'

"'Five cents for straight drinks, Steve,' says Dan, 'but ten for mixed. I ain't got to the point where I can build libraries.'

"'You ain't got to the point where you could read 'em if you did,' says Steve, and he threw down his five cents, and Dan let it go at that, but closed earlier than common.

SCOTTY got the habit of droppin' into The Fisherman's Rest nights, to have a talk and a little drink. He never treated, and the most of his talk was about how hard it was to make both ends meet, which was bosh, him doing steady work and living cheaper than most white men care to. But, anyway, he kept complainin' of the cost of living, mostly to Steve Curry, who listened to all he had to say and agreed with him that all the necessaries of life was too high, especially liquor and tobaccer, but told him they was so to stay and apt to get dearer. He yarned with him about the people in the place, and so it happened that one night Scotty asked him about the Widder Doran, he havin' seen her sitting on her piazzer doin' fancy work as he came by.

"'Oh, her!' says Steve. 'She's widder to old Bill Doran that died two years ago. Bill was nigh sixty and she twenty when they married, and after ten years or so he died and left her his money. They say she wouldn't mind tryin' her luck again. One thing, if she did, the chap wouldn't need to work, for old Bill was well fixed.'

"'She's no' a bad-lookin' woman,' says Scotty.

"'A little too beamy for my notion,' says Steve, 'but some people like full lines. She's considerable of a church worker and mighty charitable, forever giving to the poor.'

"'I'm no' a believer in indiscreeminate charities,' says Scotty.

"'No more am I,' says Steve, 'but if she had a husband he'd have the say about that. Would you like to be introduced?'

"'Weel,' says Scotty, 'I canna see ony objection.' So one night Steve took him up to Mrs. Doran's and gave him a knockdown to her.

"'Mr. McTavish has been a-viewin' you afar off, like Moses did, and I promised to lead him into Egypt,' says Steve, thinkin' to show how well he knew his Scripture, but having a poor memory for what he learned twenty-five years back. 'He's as what you might call a kindred spirit, bein' interested in all sorts of charities in the part of Scotland where he comes from, and you'll have a lot to talk about with him.'

"Mrs. Doran said she was very glad to meet him, and she began to ask all sorts of questions about the work of charitable societies in Scotland. It kept McTavish busy thinking up answers for her. Finally he had to say that bein' at sea so much he had got out of touch with the work, much against his will.

"'What particular form of the work were you most interested in, Mr. McTavish?' says she.

"This reg'larly stopped Scotty and he couldn't think what to say.

"'I believe it was temp'rance work,' says Steve. 'He's very strong on that; he believes in putting liquor down,' he says.

"'I have heard that the rum traffic has a great hold on Scotland,' says Mrs. Doran.

"'There's little call for rum there, unless in the coast towns, and then not by Scots,' says Scotty.

"'You surprise me,' says she. 'I understood there was a great deal of liquor drunk in Scotland.'

"'There may be,' says he, 'but not rum. Good whusky is a different matter.'

"'They are all bad,' says Mrs. Doran.

"'Ye're wrong,' says Scotty. 'Tis true there's much adulteration in spite of the law, but—did ye ever taste Loch Tullochgorum twelve years old, ma'am?'

"'If it is an intoxicating liquor, sir, I have not,' says Mrs. Doran huffily.

"'Then there's a treat in store for you,' says Scotty, screwing up his eyes and licking his lips like a cat dreaming of cream. 'It's as mild as milk and warms the cockles of the heart. 'Tis hard to come by, but I have a friend, an engineer aboard the *Braemar,* who whiles remembers me, and the next time he does, ma'am, it's you and I wull have a drap thegither.'

"'Do you wish to insult me, Mr. McTavish?' says Mrs. Doran. 'I'd have you know, sir, that I wouldn't pollute my lips with liquor in any shape or form.'

"Scotty saw the mistake he'd made for the first time, and started to apologize, but Steve broke in.

"'It was only his fun, Mrs. Doran. He's death on liquor of all kinds, but, bein' Scotch, he's got a keen sense of humor and couldn't help havin' his joke, even on short acquaintance. Own up, now, that you thought he was in dead earnest.'

"'I certainly did,' says she, lookin' doubtful at Scotty, who laughed rather uneasy and told her how he'd always hated the sight and taste and smell of liquor from the time he was a baby and how he had got into trouble for reprovin' the captain of a ship he was on once for indulgin' in strong drink. He said it well, too, and Mrs. Doran was sure she had misjudged him and when he went on to say how criminal it was for a captain of a ship, who was responsible for its safety to the owners, to say nothing of the lives of the crew, to take even a small snifter, she thought he was a number one Blue Ribbon.

"Scotty, having made one break, took care not to make another, and when they left he stood ace-high. Him and Steve made straight for The Fisherman's Rest, being extra dry with talking of the evils of drink, and Scotty bought for the first time on record.

"After that he began to call on the Widder Doran and warmed up her chairs a couple of nights a week. As for takin' her anywhere, or blowin' hisself, it was the last thing he thought of. They used to sit and talk of different ways of doin' good with money, and Scotty remembered a Deep Sea Fishery missionary he'd come across once and, as there wasn't no branch of that society in town, he talked about it a lot and felt quite safe. Off and on he met a good many friends of Mrs. Doran, all being interested in some different scheme for raisin' money to spend on folks that didn't earn any, but it never struck him he was sitting into a game where he'd have to sweeten to stay.

ONE day conviction was bore in upon him, as they say in experience meetings. It happened at an unfortunate time, too, making the touch all the harder. The night before he had bought from Dan Prentiss a bottle of the smoky poison he used and, goin' home, had let it fall on the pavement, where it busted. He hadn't had even a smell of the cork, and it was a sinful waste from his point of view. That bein' so, he felt mighty poor and ill-used the next morning and dry besides.

"He was workin' setting a transom into a dinghy and wondering if Dan Prentiss would do anything if he claimed there was a flaw in the glass of the bottle, when who should come along but Mrs. Doran! She had a little book and a pencil, with a rubber band around 'em, in her hand, and she brought up alongside Scotty and came to a mooring on a sawhorse. She had

on a fine dress and a gold brooch and a hat with feathers in it and looked real fancy and no more than her age. Scotty thought so, too, and, after they had said good morning, he told her how well she was looking and how nice her clothes fitted her.

"The widder blushed a little, bein' some out of practice, and told him he was a flatterer. Scotty said he wasn't; only a plain-spoken man, who said what he thought, no matter who heard him. Getting busier, he said she brightened the place for him and he hoped she would come often and not go away too soon and that it was a real charity for her to come and see him.

" 'It is really a charity that brings me, Mr. McTavish,' says she. 'If it wasn't for that I dunno's I could have got up courage to come and see you all alone. But in a good cause we must be brave. I am this morning collecting money for a very worthy object,' she goes on, 'for the Heathen's Homes Furnishing Society, and I hope you will put your name down on my subscription list.'

"She stripped off the rubber band from the little book and shoved it and the pencil at Scotty, who backed off as if it would bite.

" 'I'm no' sure I've heard of yon society before,' says he, beating about for a chance to draw clear. 'What will be the object of it?'

" 'The object is to set young heathen couples up when they start housekeeping,' says she. 'To provide a few simple utensils for their use and a few good books that they can read in their spare time. It was suggested by an address a missionary gave here some time ago, and I have a letter from him approving very heartily of the scheme. It is my own idea, Mr. McTavish, and I hope you will help me with it both by subscribing yourself and by taking a subscription list and getting your friends to do likewise.'

" 'But the heathen canna have great need of house furnishings and the like,' says Scotty.

" 'Why not?' says she.

" 'Well, for one thing, there's no place to put them, unless on the trees,' says he.

" 'You are quite mistaken,' says she. 'Their abodes may be humble, but they have wigwams and pagodas and igloos and caves that might be made bright and attractive for a very little and keep them home in the evenings instead of going out to sun dances and potlatches and jamborees.'

" 'They would not be having sun dances in the evenings,' says Scotty.

" 'Well, moon dances, then; it's the same thing,' says she. 'You are not going to refuse to subscribe to my own pet scheme?'

" 'Sartainly not,' says Scotty, there bein' no help for it. 'It's a great pleasure to me to give to the extent of my abeelity to anything *you* support. What will it be? Twenty-five cents, or maybe a half a dollar?'

" 'Half a dollar!' says she. 'You're joking, Mr. McTavish. I expected five dollars at least, from *you*.'

"Scotty fairly gasped for breath.

" 'Ma conscience, woman!' says he. 'Five dollars! Do I want to buy homes for all unceevilized creation?'

" 'You don't have to give one cent unless you want to, Mr. McTavish!' says she, getting up off the sawhorse very dignified and reaching out for the book. 'I see I have been mistaken in you, and after this you'll not be troubled with my company.'

" 'Bide a bit,' says Scotty, seein' where he was at and how hard he was up against it. 'The money is nothing. I was just having my joke.'

"He wrote down his name for five dollars, but it was all he could do to get the pencil to make the figures, and after the close call he'd had he couldn't refuse to take a subscription list and

promise to get all his friends to give up, too. Mrs. Doran went away quite happy; but if she was, Scotty wasn't, and what he said while patching up the dinghy would have made the pitch bubble on her seams if she hadn't been clinker built.

SCOTTY didn't eat much supper that night, thinkin' of the five. He made up his mind that he'd get Steve Curry, at least, and perhaps one or two more to put down their names and so make a hit with Mrs. Doran as a good charity canvasser. So, after he had run the tap onto his dishes and stuck his knife and fork into the sand box to clean them off, he makes for The Fisherman's Rest, where he cal'lates to find the boys.

"Steve was there, and Scotty sat down alongside him and, to make a good beginning, asked him what he'd have. Steve was that surprised he ordered beer when he might just as well have had better stuff, and when he thought of that he wasn't pleased. However, he drank his beer when it came and wondered what was up. After they had their drink Scotty judged it was time to make a beginning, and he asked Steve if he ever gave anything to the needy.

"Steve said he contributed to support Dan Prentiss pretty steady and what was left over he had plenty of use for. He said he didn't see the sense of a man wasting his money just for the pleasure of giving it away; he always tried to check his tendency to waste.

" 'Man,' says Scotty, 'but it's blessed to give. I know from my own experience.'

" 'Your wot?' says Steve. 'When did you give anybody anything, I should like to know?'

" 'Weel,' says Scotty, 'I had the plaisure of subscribin' my name for five dollars to a verra guid cause, the morn.'

" 'Was it early in the morning?' asks Steve. 'About three, before you was rightly awake? I've had them sort of fool dreams myself when I've et too heavy. I wake up all of a shake.'

" 'It was about ten, or it might be eleven in the morning,' says Scotty.

" 'Here!' says Steve. 'You ain't well, or maybe your memory is playin' you tricks. The sun was extra hot to-day. You don't feel no dull sense of oppression nor spots before your eyes and yellow flashes, do you? Lots of fevers starts that way.'

" 'I tell ye,' says Scotty, 'I set down my name for five dollars to a charity Mrs. Doran was collecting money for.'

" 'Ho!' says Steve. ' "Churchy lefem," as the French say. Women is the ruination of men. There ain't no limit to the money they'll spend if we let 'em. And here I thought it was only the hot sun had you spinning. Wot was the worthy object you was stuck for?'

" 'She calls it the Heathen's Homes Furnishing Society.' says Scotty, with as near a blush as he could manage, bein' a carroty blonde, to start with, and Steve nigh fell off his chair.

" 'Holy mackerel!' says he, when he could speak for laughing. 'Wot a name! And did she say how they was to be furnished? Steen beds for the wives of King Fewclothes, and extra large stew pans for his kitchen, suitable to cook missionaries, and a spittoon for his royal highness when he chaws. Likewise a album for the missionary to sign his autygraft in—"When this you see, remember me." Also a hanger for clothes and a little tin idol for the mantelpiece. Well, well! What will people start next?'

" 'Weel,' says Scotty, 'I'm no' sure of the preceese disbursement of the money and, speakin' man to man, to the de'il wi' a' heathen! But I gied the siller, an' na doot I'll get my reward in the next warld where they cease from troubling. And, while we are on the sub-

jec', she gied me a subscription list to get filled, an' here it is, an' if you're a friend to me ye'll put down your name for five dollars yoursel'.'

"Steve's grin went off his mouth like it was being chased, and he stared at Scotty as if he'd shoved a rattlesnake at him.

"'Are you going clean crazy?' says he. 'Ain't it bad enough to fall into the toils of a siren and be dragged down to poverty and starvation yourself, but you must try and ruin men as never did you any harm and often saved you from drinking alone? How's my wife and children to live after I'm married if I go spendin' money on other women's schemes and furnishing homes for new-married heathens? The next thing will be a society of godfathers and a subscription for mugs and spoons—a steady subscription. Lemme tell you,' he says, quite excited, 'I'll put up like a long-sufferin' Christian man, to the extent of a carving knife and fork, if you and Mrs. Doran ever get spliced, and subsequent, if there's any little troubles, I'll stand for a spoon, or maybe two and no more, but I ain't goin' to take five dollars' stock in a heathen incubator works and don't you forget it! Ham never orter been let inside the Ark, nohow,' he says. 'It was risky for the chickens, and should have been thought of.'

"Do what he would, Scotty couldn't get Steve to put down his name, and presently he gave it up and tried it on old man Andrews, who he judged was ripe for charity, having seen him put down four nor'westers of Jamaica atop of quite a bit of rye. Unfort'netly, old man Andrews had paid his taxes that day and was just beginning to forget it, and the subscription list set him going again, and he had the name of being eloquent in his younger days.

"'I regret I can't oblige you, Mr. Mic—hic—Tavish,' says he; 'one reason being that I have contributed as much as I can stand in one day to the revenoo of my beloved country, and another reason is,' says he, raisin' his voice like he was hailin' the foretops'l-yard, and bellerin' it out of him like a midwinter blow on the Georges, 'that I don't go trusting my hard-earned money to no red-headed, smoke-soaked, bone-faced, pesky Presbyterian, Glasgow gallows bird like what I see afore me. I don't want to git personal,' he says, 'but the sight of a blubber-tryin', oat-eatin', split-the-wind North Sea herring like you unsettles my stummick, and you can take your subscription list and go South with it, or I'll lose my temper and tell you what I think of you.'

"'Mister An-n-drews,' says Scotty, 'ye're an auld man or I'd mak' ye swallow the list, as well as your words.'

"Old man Andrews looked wicked at him and reached out his hand for his glass, and heaved it at his head, and we had to hold 'em apart, Scotty talking his home talk and the old man spittin' out langwidge that blistered where it hit.

THAT pretty near settled Scotty on gettin' subscriptions, though he tried one or two more, who turned him down easy, and he was at his wit's end. The next day he hunted up Steve Curry and asked him what was best to do.

"'Tell her you can't get the boys to chip in,' says Steve.

"'No,' says Scotty, 'I must get the subscriptions.'

"'We won't give 'em,' says Steve, 'not to that foolishness. I tell you what to do. Put down some of the boys' names yourself. She won't know where the money comes from.'

"'D'ye mean for me to pay it all mysel'?' says Scotty, shocked.

"'Sure,' says Steve. 'Who else? She'll think you're the whole thing, and you want to stand in with her, don't you? It's a investment, like advertis-

ing it to a storekeeper. Try to look at it that way.'

"Scotty swore up and down he wouldn't do anything of the kind, but after he had tried to think of some other scheme and couldn't, he agreed, and Steve Curry wrote down a dozen names for a dollar apiece. He wanted to make it five dollars, but Scotty wouldn't hear of it, and they compromised on putting down old man Andrews for two dollars and a half. Scotty took the list up to Mrs. Doran that night, and she was surprised when she saw the names.

"However did you get these men to subscribe, Mr. McTavish?' says she. 'To my certain knowledge they never gave to anything before.' And she looks at Scotty, a bit sidewise.

"'Weel,' says Scotty, 'I talked wi' them, and they came 'round. I'll no' deny that it was deeficult to persuade one or two.'

"'It must have been,' says she, 'and you deserve a great deal of credit for it. It was very good of you to take so much trouble for me—very, very good of you.'

"'Dinna speak o't,' says Scotty. 'I'd do more than that for you, Mrs. Doran, ma'am.'

"'Would you, really, Mr. McTavish?' says she, very soft.

"'I would,' says Scotty, speakin' bold. 'I'd give ye all I have, an' mysel'. Will ye tak' me, ma'am?'

"'Yes,' says she, 'Sandy, I will. Oh, don't be so foolish!' for Scotty had run to a clinch as soon as he heard the word.

"After they had held hands and so on, for as long as a widder can be expected to, she said it was all on account of the subscription list, and she was going to go to every man on it and collect the money and thank him for subscribing. 'Though no one,' says she, 'could resist my Sandy if he asked anything of him.'

"So Scotty had to fix it with Steve Curry, and Steve passed the word among the boys and gave them the money, explaining it was a good cause, and they all kept mum, though old man Andrews nigh had a stroke a-doing of it. And Scotty and the widder were married and lived more or less happy ever after, as the story books say. Steve gave 'em the carving knife and fork, but after that he kept to his word, and wouldn't stand for more than two spoons, though the opportunity offered."

VIRGINIA'S "BOY" GOVERNOR

HARRY FLOOD BYRD of Winchester, Virginia, who last August won the Democratic primary's nomination for the governorship of the Old Dominion by an overwhelming and unprecedented majority, is only thirty-eight years of age. He began his career when he was fifteen years old. At that time his father gave him the remains of the only weekly newspaper in Winchester, the "remains" consisting of a broken-down hand press and a lot of unpaid bills.

The boy worked so hard and to such fine effect that he soon made the sheet a profitable afternoon daily. By the time he was twenty-one, the community recognized him as a business man of outstanding ability, and the directors of a bankrupt turnpike company gave him the job of rebuilding the highway and putting the company on a solid financial basis. He did it. After that, his life was one uninterrupted procession of business and political triumphs.

At the Hour of the Rat

By Charles Kroth Moser

Author of "In Chinatown," "A Night on Police," Etc.

There are patterns in life of many colorful contrasts, but none more so than the juxtaposition of East and West in that corner of San Francisco where Chinatown nestles amidst the roar and bustle of the white man.

IT was nearing the Hour of the Rat, and all Chinatown lay wrapped in the sleep of the virtuous, when Gee Gam slipped quietly down the street and stood for a moment before the temple door. He flung a handful of red papers into the air and watched the soft night wind waft a number of them through the open portal.

"Ting haouw!"—"Very good"—he muttered, following his prayers across the threshold. His muffled footfalls as he ascended the stairway aroused the drowsy keeper of the joss from dreams of yenshee and poppy fields; the old fellow met Gee Gam before the great bronze urn and bowed three times in abject suppliance. Gee Gam threw him a few of the despised nickels of the white devils.

"That thou and thy honorable friends may drink samshu together, O sacred keeper of the great joss!" he said, hurrying toward the image of the goddess. Then he added, under his breath:

"Yea, and may it scald thy gullet, thou base-born robber of the faithful!"

He passed around the shining rows of armor, the punk sticks burning in brazen bowls, the altars of ebon wood garnished with foods for the refreshment of the gods, until he stood before mighty Kwan Yin.

From her single, huge, lidless eye the goddess gazed stonily down into his own disfigured orb. Gee Gam was not good to look upon. A hideous burn stretched across one side of his face and into an eyeless socket; his nostrils were guttered with the surgeon's stitches. From the chin to the shaven scalp his face was pitted with smallpox scars.

A slabby upper lip, drawn sharply back from yellow, wolfish fangs, disclosed a mouth that made the cherry-cheeked maidens in the *hookah* quarter shudder. And yet it was in quest of a maid that Gee Gam came to invoke the aid of the gracious goddess, Kwan Yin.

FALLING on knees and elbows before the image, Gee Gam beat his head upon the floor many times. The great stone eye still glared, unmoved by his prostration. Then he half arose to his feet, plucked from his blouse a large Shanghai rooster and from the rubber band within his sleeve a heavy butcher's knife. One quick blow and the rooster's head lay at the goddess' feet; from the severed neck three tiny fountains spurted red. Gee Gam bathed his hands in the crimson dye, then pressed them to his forehead, and began his singsong prayer:

"O thou mighty Kwan Yin, let now thy august countenance look with favor upon this the earth-groveling body of thy slave. Behold thou the royal cock of Shanghai which thy vile slave hath, even at this moment, out of his poverty and rags, sacrificed, that illustrious Kwan Yin, the mighty one, should eat and be fat. Hear thou then the prayer of thy dog, O queen of the star worlds, and by the sacred beard of him that begat me I will give unto thee a silver tael. Give me thy favor, O wondrous one, and may I be sewed up in the body of a swine and thrown to the village dogs if I do not sing to thee one thousand times ten thousand chants.

"It is that I would have the white lily, Ng Loon, who thou knowest is slave girl to that fat swineherd, Wong Chang Ho—may his soul seep water through the hide of a fish!—and whose riches are like the multitude of thy virtues, innumerable. And I pray thee, mighty Kwan Yin, that she may be given to me. Thrice already have I sent her soft notes on rice paper which has cost me three yen, and yet has she not answered. Give to me the fluttering of her maiden's heart, illustrious Kwan Yin, and show me now the sign that she shall be unto me a wife and the mother of my sons."

Ceasing his prayer, with many prostrations of his eellike body, Gee Gam picked up the divining sticks that lay on the altar. By these Kwan Yin answered the supplications of the faithful. They were of dark sandalwood, half elliptical, like the small end of an egg, on one side, and flat on the other; the length was no more than the span between Gee Gam's finger and thumb. When deftly sent spinning to the feet of the goddess, if they rested on the curved side, her favor was assured; if they fell flat, displeasure was equally pronounced.

"Ah!" said Gee Gam, as he slapped one smartly to the floor and saw it rest flat. "Thou dost not love me, Kwan Yin. I will add an hundred *shen* of rice to my prayers."

He cast another stick. "Art thou still displeased, O majestic one? Then will I give to thee the livers of twenty fat ducks with the rice and the thousand times ten thousand praises."

A third time he spun the divining rod before the disgruntled deity. Like the others, it fell against his petition.

"Have mercy, O Kwan Yin," he whined. "Thy slave is poor, and his sons are crying for food. Give me thy aid, and I will sell my young daughters to buy thee honey and white lilies."

Gee Gam's memory was conveniently bad; he forgot that he had neither sons nor daughters, and, besides, why tell one's family affairs?

Many times he gathered the rods up and threw them with the most finished dexterity, but always they fell with the flat side down.

"Thou *shalt* give me help," he said, glowering at the stony eye and the

monstrous carven ears. He threw the sticks again and again. The decree of Kwan Yin was inexorable.

At last he placed them back on the altar, and the curses his lips dared not utter blazed from his weird eye. Darting a stealthy look toward the nodding keeper of the joss, he raised the body of the cock and thrust it into his blouse.

"I bought him of a foreign pig, Kwan Yin, and his meat is tainted; it is unfit for thee to eat, but thy slave will stew it into a gruel for his hungry children."

A look of ineffable piety beamed out of his face as he approached the somnolent keeper; but in passing the sacred table he put out his hand with the innocence of a little child and filched a pot of lilies.

"The gods ever give light fingers to the heavy-hearted," Gee Gam murmured blandly, as he slipped the lilies into his sleeve and tiptoed out.

FROM out of a narow alley where tiny red lights gleamed suggestively came the plaintive squealing of a tortured fiddle. Its single string was being harried into unearthly lamentations by the hand of some slave girl entertaining her lover. Gee Gam's crafty brain caught an inspiration; the kind that comes to all great men without being sought.

"By the ghost of my honorable uncle, if Kwan Yin deny me my prayers, is it not that she has been paid richer vows? The star-eyed Ng Loon, whose feet are like the golden lilies of Nanking, may have some better-favored lover! Aye, it is a good thought; for if it be true, it is well to know such things. Who knows but there might be many yen in the knowledge? Set a fox to watch a pheasant and, may it please the gods, one dines on game."

Like the shadow of foreboding doom, he glided down the street and turned into the red-and-gilded archway of Pecheeli Alley. Opposite the wicketed window where Ng Loon dwelt, he crouched into a doorway and effaced himself in its gloom. Gee Gam inherited the cold-blooded patience of his forefathers. Not the gray-whiskered rat sitting over the cockroaches' nest watches for the coming of his prey more patiently than did Gee Gam the narrow window where Ng Loon's light twinkled.

But he had no great while to wait. From around the corner at the end of the alley came a softly stepping, nonchalant figure. It wore a wide, slouch hat and loose, satin breeches. The cue, dangling to its heels, ended in a tassel of red silk; it was plaited only to the base of the neck, and from there disappeared under the hat in a broad, flowing band of straight hair—the badge of the Chinese exquisite.

As he approached Ng Loon's window, the foppish youth began to sing in the distressing screams of the peacock—whose even song may send thrills of delight through his own soul, but earns him brickbats and abjurgations from less sympathetic natures. Gee Gam's single eye pinned itself on the henna-stained face of the dandy. He had a premonition of "things doing."

For one brief moment the song and the figure paused under the window; long enough, however, for the ferret eye in the doorway to catch a glimpse of Ng Loon at the wicket and to see a pellet of rice paper descending into the deft hand beneath it. The figure and the peacock screams passed on up the alley. Gee Gam leered.

"Ah, Luey Bo Lung, it is thou who wouldst rob the old duck's nest of its eider feather! Thou ill-sired spawn of a she-eel! Who could believe thee so base? It is thou who wouldst pluck the fairest blossom in illustrious Wong Chang Ho's garden of lilies and pot it in thy mud hovel. Thou scum; may thou and all thy posterity rot in the carcasses of fleas!" He lighted a taper

cigarette, thinking and smiling to himself for a moment.

"It is well for the august Wong Chang Ho that I am indeed his dear friend," he muttered to himself. "Here will I give him my generous services. As for thee, Luey Bo Lung—it may happen that I shall see thee again." With which prophetic soliloquy, Gee Gam wandered back to his pipe and the yenshee bowl in the rear of his little barber shop, where he composed his soul in the gentle slumber of the guileless.

THE next night Gee Gam lay like a sleeping beggar outside of Ng Loon's window. His strident snores even disturbed the amorous spooning of the alley cats, but from under the rim of his tattered hat the ferret eye beheld all of Luey Bo's little comedy of love with wide-awake malignance. Just as the paper pellet was descending into the lover's palm, the beggar sprang to his feet and ran like one pursued by the *feng-shin*—earth fiends. He bumped the sleek Luey Bo amidships, and both staggered under the shock. The billet-doux fell to the pavement.

"Thou clay-headed ass," cried Gee Gam, setting his foot on the love message, "wouldst thou have me devoured by the *feng-shin* because thy carcass is too clumsy for thy wits to drag it out of my way! May ten thousand devils boil thy mother in oil!"

He stooped to pull up his white stockings and slipped the paper pellet under his instep, unmindful that the discomfited Romeo was fervently shouting horrible reflections on the honor of his ancestry—even back to the ninety-sixth generation of them that bore him.

Some hours later Gee Gam groveled before the oily, fat form of old Wong Chang Ho as the illustrious man of much money sat drinking samshu behind a curtain in his bazaar.

"O mighty one, I am a dog who comes crawling to the feet of his master," quoth Gee Gam.

Wong Ho narrowed his little eyes into slits of cunning green light.

"The fox was my father and the serpent my mother," he answered, with full understanding of Gee Gam's attitude. "Speak on, little brother, what burden thou bearest in thy pure heart."

"O illustrious noble," and Gee Gam fawned, "thou hast sold the priceless white lily, Ng Loon, who grows in the gardens of the gods like a lotus blossom in a pond of frog weeds, to a base-born beater of women; he is even now scheming to take her to his vile den of sinfulness. I would, O heaven-born son of the great gods, that thou wouldst deny him the maid and sell her to me."

Wong Ho, being born of the fox and the serpent, understood the situation perfectly. Also he comprehended that Gee Gam's offer to buy the maid was merely his diplomatic offer to sell his information.

"Thy price, O faithful one, whom the ancestral shades honor for thy truth?"

"Ah, puissant Wong Ho! Thy slave is a lump of mud. He is a poor worm who hath no raiment but rags, his sons hide their shame in jute sacks. But thou art ever generous, and will give to thy slave three hundred of the white pigs' filthy yen, for——"

"Thou art a miserable jackal, who wouldst feed out of the tombs of thy fathers," interrupted the fat merchant. "Thou wouldst steal the punk sticks from thy grandsire's casket and sell them for ginseng, thou ravenous beast! Where are thy proofs, swine-suckled?"

"And the three hundred silver yen, illustrious?"

"Who am I, to haggle with an earth worm? The yen are thine, whelp of a hyena, if thou canst produce the proofs of thy tale; and see that thou liest not, or I will have thy tongue plucked out and boiled in lard!"

Gee Gam took from his sleeve the rice-paper note and laid it in the palm of Wong Ho. The sleek old plutocrat read it without a blink of his fat eyes. Then he waddled over to the safe, standing in the corner, and counted out some coins.

"Here are thy yen, thou split-tongued crow. Begone with thee! As for Luey Bo Lung, the *po tautsi*—messengers of fate—shall whet their knives on his bones."

Gee Gam shook hands with himself, smiling as one who has done a noble deed, and slipped out into the sunshine after a low bow of obeisance to the magnate of Banshi bazaar.

AT the moment, Luey Bo Lung, proud of his three names and disdaining his meaner associates who owned but two, sat in the House of the Thirty Thousand Delights playing *pi-gow*. Luey Bo felt reckless; last night a clumsy beggar had knocked out of his hand a love message from the peerless lily-footed star of the Orient, Ng Loon. Such things are very annoying; they harry one's nerves. All day he had felt his loss, and the mood was on him to plunge furiously into the frolics of fortune. Strange where the note could have fallen to, anyhow; he had swept the street and the gutter with his fingers when the disgusting beggar had disappeared.

Luey Bo flung a handful of coins on the table and, without a twitching muscle in his face, watched the banker rake the money in as the black bean fell against his bet. He flung more handfuls of his fisher-father's savings into the pool, and still the inscrutable banker raked them in. It had been so all through the game. Plainly Luey Bo was out of luck.

The gently insistent brushing of a fellow player's arm against his shoulder irritated the young blood; it was bad luck, and these common citizens with only two names sometimes have unpleasant crawling things on their clothes. He glanced up impatiently and met a single weasel-sharp eye gleaming at him from a face pitted with pockmarks. He recognized the beggar at once and scowled. Then he turned his attention to *pi-gow*.

"The sun-bright Luey Bo Lung flirts heartlessly with fortune to-night," said the beggar, in low monotones. "It is always so when the eyes of a maid have dazzled the understanding of a young man."

Luey Bo did not deign to raise his face. After a moment the beggar added, with wily indifference:

"But he who would find the pearl must first eat the oyster."

The dandy yawned in his chair, arose and flecked daintily at some cigarette ashes on his blouse. As he left the table, he remarked, in cool tones:

"I would that my father's wife had borne me a brother, that he might talk with me over a bowl of chop suey in the Retreat of the Delicious Duck."

The beggar followed at his heels as they passed out of the gambling house, and in the street Luey Bo said:

"We will go to the hash house of Bhong Chew, instead; it is better than thou and thy kind. Also the walls there have not so many ears—and the sinful ones we have just left will not spy on us there."

Over the steaming suey Luey Bo minced with his chopsticks, waiting for his vis-à-vis to lunge first; but the wise one elected to parry first—if there was need. He wore down the dandy's patience.

"Speak out, scar-faced jackal! I can hear thee," Luey Bo muttered.

Gee Gam, the beggar, looked mysterious.

"It is of the golden lily to whom the stars have loaned their beauty that I come to speak. I have much news for thee, O radiant favorite of the gods

and women, but thou knowest that I am a poor man with many hungry mouths to feed. That pudgy gander, Wong Chang Ho, would be most generous if I defiled the virtue of my fathers to tell him—but I am guileless as the young lamb, and cannot. Besides, thou wilt be more generous than he; the gods shower happinesses on those who give alms to the beggar."

"I will give thee five hundred sen."

Gee Gam narrowed his baleful eye to a crafty gleam of mirth; his laugh was cold and bitter as the tingle of a knife blade between one's shoulders.

"Three hundred yen," he answered.

Luey Bo knew when finesse ended and business began. The size of the demand told him the value of the beggar's news to him.

"Thou monster of thieves! I'll give it thee if thou tell me not one lie. But a single false word and thy body shall fatten the carrion eaters."

"May the talons of vultures rip out my liver in pieces if I speak not the truth," said Gee Gam fervently.

"There is a price on thy head, Luey Bo. The fatherless swine, Wong Chang Ho, hath winded thy affairs with Ng Loon, and this night, in the councils of the Suey Sings, Toy Ah Lee, who thou knowest is chief of the Suey Sings, hath cast the red bean that delivered thee over to the *po tautsi*. Even now they are grinding their hatchets to split thy skull—and for a miserable five hundred of the white pigs' yen."

"How dost thou know all this?"

"My cousin is a Suey Sing. He told me on the sacred oath of the cock's red blood, after I had slipped the razor over his honorable scalp. And I swore myself to secrecy. But I tell thee because I am thy slave. And my cousin, too, is a most virtuous man and truthful, even as am I, Luey Bo. Thou wilt not forget him in thy alms!"

"I will write the paper for him an hundred yen," answered the young Chinese absent-mindedly. The news Gee Gam had to tell called for serious thought.

The barber-beggar brought brushes and an ink slab. "Make both papers to my name, O most generous of the sons of Quan Tai, and I will give one to my cousin," he purred suavely. Luey Bo wrote the checks; he knew well that Gee Gam and his cousin sat on the same mat, but what booted that when there was a price on his own head! Afterward he sat silently meditating, while the wily one's eye played with him as the cat paws a terror-stricken mouse.

"Thou hast the wisdom of the snake, and bitest with the tooth of the asp," said the hunted one presently. "What is thy advice, little brother?"

Gee Gam led trumps. "Alas! I am but a donkey made to bear the saddle of the high-born. And yet do I remember the precepts of my mother: 'He strikes best who strikes first,' and again, 'If one will not enter the tiger's den, how can he capture her whelps!'"

"But if one feeds the worms and the *feng-shin* with this swine's flesh—Wong Ho—may not the Suey Sings call for more blood and the souls of good men be sent to perdition?" asked Luey Bo.

"Not so, wonderful one. For know that Toy Ah Lee, the chief of the Suey Sings, hath for a long time past had his wanton eyes upon the flowerlike beauties of Ng Loon. Efface from the earth this ulcer-spotted Wong Ho, and Toy Ah Lee will forget thy crimes. Afterward thou may have to reckon with him for the form of thy heart's desire—but *that* is another day. Toy Ah Lee wishes mightily the maiden, but she wishes for thee—which is much; besides, the chief of the Suey Sings is old and toothless, and he has his price."

"Thou hast a tongue like the attar oil of roses and a heart like thine own razors," said Luey Bo, aghast with ad-

miration. "But I am not a hatchet man?"

"Listen," said Gee Gam, playing the ace, while he wheedled in singsonging words: "At the hour when the sun has fallen from the zenith two spaces, Wong Ho comes to my miserable shop, that I may scrape his honorable chin. If thou shouldst happen to pass along the window front with the weapon of spouting fate in thy sleeve—what then? But thou shouldst know!" He shrugged his shoulders.

Luey Bo lighted a taper cigarette as he arose from the tiny table. "I will bethink me of thy advice, little brother."

They went out, Gee Gam walking softly in the footsteps of the lover.

THE next afternoon the sun shone brightly down on the Chinese quarter; all the world seemed smiling, at peace with itself. The Chinatown police squad had segregated into a dawdling patrolman, standing at each street corner, idly swinging a club and longing, without hope, that something exciting would turn up to break the monotony of the simple life. Detective Wren strolled lazily up the street, looking for free cigars. Life was a placid lake, and the sunshine beat upon it warm, gently and soft, like the hovering wings of the angel of brotherly love.

Suddenly there rang out the sharp *bang! bang!* of pistol shots. Wren bolted around a corner of and fell against a crowd of gibbering, monkey-faced Chinese hurrying helter-skelter toward the doorway of a barber shop. He knocked the excited heathen right and left with mailed fists and sprang into the room.

On the floor lay the wealthy merchant, Wong Chang Ho, wounded and kicking his fat heels in the air like a dismembered frog. A frightened barber, with one eye burned out and a pock-pitted face, cowered behind a squalid chair; he was screaming and waving a razor hysterically.

Wong Ho was dying. A bullet hole under his temple, and another behind the ear, told a simple tale. A shattered windowpane, with the broken glass scattered on the inside, showed where the murderer had stood when his death-dealing pistol sped its messengers to Wong Ho. The sight of the detective restored the barber's courage. He left the refuge of the squalid chair and stood close beside Wren, talking brokenly in pidgin English.

"Me see one man there." He pointed to the window. "Him shoot two time; then him heap lun *chop-chop*—quickly—up stleet. Me t'ink, mebbe, Bow Ling Alley—no can tell. Me holler *man-man;* him no stop! No sabe him mebbe all same highbinder. No, me t'ink not know him next one time. Him *poo haouw*—no good!"

The detective rushed out and up the street, with the pock-marked barber at his heels. The detective was looking for the nearest rookery, or den, where the murderer might be in hiding for the moment. Gee Gam touched his arm.

"You sabe Bow Ling hop joint? No? All right, I show you. Mebbe him there—long backside, topside this house, where p'lice no can find muchee well."

They rushed up the rickety steps of a shambling old tenement and raced down the dark corridors, until at a narrow door Gee Gam paused.

"You go," he whispered, shivering for his own skin as he crouched close to the wall. The mouth of the tale-bearer is soon stopped with dust in Chinatown.

The sleuth broke through the door; the air was turgid with opium smoke and half a dozen Chinese lay sprawled in the bunks, wooing the languorous charms of the white poppy. All seemed intoxicated with the drug; they took no

more notice of the detective than of the flies settling personal disputes on their noses. Apparently each of them had been smoking for hours. Wren made a hurried search of the room; there was no evidence of crime hidden there and every smoker lay stuporous with the incense of his love. The detective felt he was losing time; he went back to Gee Gam and reported that no murderer had passed that way. Gee Gam's mouth lifted slowly into a wolfish sneer:

"Mebbe so, mebbe no. You go back one time. Feel man's heart; him beat slow *ting haouw*—all right! Mebbe one man, him pound all same *chop-chop* like devil hammer. How you think him come so—euh?" The blue lips grinned away from the yellow fangs, and his shoulders danced an Asiatic shrug.

Wren went back and placed his hand over each man's heart. The third man's pulses were driving the blood through his arteries like the strokes of a piston rod, though his face was a mask and his body lay limp in the embrace of the poppy. Strapped close to his ribs, underneath his arm, Wren found a huge pistol, with two empty chambers smelling of freshly burned powder. It was Luey Bo Lung.

"You're my man, all right," said Wren, laying violent hands on the plaited cue and dragging him to the doorway.

They were just in time to catch one glimpse of Gee Gam sliding, full steam on, down the broken banisters.

Luey Bo, looking into the future with complacent eyes, saw himself dangling at the end of a swinging rope. He had been caught with the goods on him, and he knew there was no escape. Well, *that* did not matter. *Mas chee!* What's the odds! Every one has to die. But—

"In the devil pits of the *feng-shin* I shall settle with Gee Gam," Luey Bo swore softly to himself.

THAT night, at the Hour of the Rat, Gee Gam and two coolies slipped softly out of a closed auto in the alley where dwelt the peerless Ng Loon. Like shadows of evil omen they crept to the entrance of her abode and crawled up the steps. Halfway to the landing they encountered a medley of yellow faces and dark blouses. Rude hands laid sudden hold on Gee Gam's cue and flung him headlong down the stairs. The coolies fled ignominiously.

"Out of the way, thou gutter dogs!" a voice roared in his ears. "Darest thou to pollute the pathway of peerless Ng Loon with thy vile carcass! She is become the heaven-sent wife of mighty Toy Ah Lee, our illustrious master. To your kennel, beast, or the Suey Sings shall boil thy blood for cats' stew!"

They trampled on his body as they bore the kidnaped form of Ng Loon over the threshold and out into the dark alley.

Gee Gam, looking after them, nursed his battered head and wept.

"Ah, that vile toad, Toy Ah Lee, hath stolen the precious pearl from me. It is the treachery of a wicked man, who hast the villainy of the white pigs. Yea, and this is the business of that glutton, Kwan Yin; she hath beaten me sore, because I was hungry and ate the cock's flesh, and forgot to say the thousand-times-ten-thousand prayers. May the foreign Jesu turn her temple into a straw heap!

"And thou, vermin-eaten Ng Loon! May thou and Toy Ah Lee tear out each other's eyes with hot pincers! But I—I have but seven hundred paltry yen; indeed, I am a poor man. The gods have no smiles for us who love virtue!"

A DISTINCTLY AMERICAN RESOURCE

WHEN and if the United States goes to war again, it will be with at least one distinct advantage over the enemy. The advantage will reside in the possession of a world monopoly in helium gas. How great an advantage this chemical auxiliary will constitute is suggested in the belief of many strategists that Germany, had she enjoyed the unlimited use of helium during the World War, could have subdued all her enemies by the intensive development and employment of helium-inflated Zeppelins.

For helium is the only known gas that is light enough to be practicable for use in balloons and dirigibles, and at the same time noninflammable. Hydrogen is lighter but is highly inflammable. Neither the Allies nor Germany were able to obtain helium for their lighter-than-air craft during the war. Hydrogen was used. Accordingly, the dirigible airships employed in the World War were unable to face fire risk with impunity. They were obliged to meet the enemy with extreme caution. Had they been inflated with helium they could have attacked boldly.

Helium will no more burn than will water. In fact it has been utilized, in experiments, to extinguish fire. This is its chief advantage. It has another point of superiority over hydrogen. It can be purified after use and employed over again. So that, while its first cost is far in excess of the cost of hydrogen, it is actually cheaper in the long run, since very little helium need be lost. Experts estimate that the replacement factor for helium should range between 25 and 40 per cent per annum. The replacement factor for hydrogen is many hundreds per cent.

Helium has never been found in large quantities except in the United States. Even here it is scanty as compared to other gases. But it exists in sufficient volume to meet all conceivable military and commercial requirements, providing it is properly conserved. A recent exploration of our helium resources, conducted by the United States bureau of mines and the geological survey, revealed that helium occurs in some natural gases to the extent of one-half per cent to two per cent, by volume, of the natural gas. It has been found in natural gases produced in six of our Western States. Its discovery has always been incidental to drilling for fuel gases or for oil.

Now that the importance of helium as a factor in commercial aviation and national defense is understood, plans for the conservation of the gas are being matured. It is estimated that, without conservation, enough helium is being wasted through the combustion of fuel gases—of which helium is a by-product—to inflate hundreds of dirigible airships every year.

Helium is separated from the gases in which it occurs by reducing these gases to a liquid state. The liquified gases are drawn off and pure helium remains. Until a short time ago the process of separating helium was extremely expensive, and the cost of the gas averaged around one hundred dollars per thousand cubic feet. The separation process has now been improved and the current price of helium is around thirty dollars a thousand, with a further reduction in production cost expected which will bring the price of helium down to fifteen or twenty dollars.

The Taming of a Tutor

By Ralph D. Paine

Author of "Footloose and Footlights," "A Very Commonplace Hero," Etc.

The pith of humor is the complete and sudden collapse of dignity—such as when a very small, but well-greased, pig upsets, in the very center of the Yale campus, the most unpopular instructor on the college faculty—"Snoopy" Morgan.

IN the autumn term of his senior year at Yale, Hector Alonzo McGrath organized his "Personally Conducted Tours," which enjoyed a short-lived but meteoric fame. The methods of the leader and his band of chosen adventurers possessed the touch of erratic originality that adds to the gayety of life on the campus.

The great idea came to Hector during the rather dull period between the end of the football season and the beginning of the Christmas holidays, and he lost no time in recruiting Jim Stearns, captain of the eleven, and Tommy Prentice, the shortstop, as charter members. Bolivar Martinez, coxswain of the crew, who had recently returned from the midst of a South American revolution which had been successfully waged by his fiery father, was annexed by the "Personally Conducteds" as one who might be relied on in any crisis demanding strategy and desperate valor.

While the pilgrimages of this exclusive quartet were shrouded in more or less secrecy, its rites and symbols were displayed in full sight of the campus. The rallying cry of the clan was usually heard in the early hours of a fine, crisp, starlit night, when long rows of dormitory windows patterned the darkness with squares of cheery illumination.

At such a time, if the mood took hold of him, Hector Alonzo McGrath would fling his books aside, trust to "skinning through the next morning's recitations on bull luck," and, hastening downstairs to the dusky campus quadrangle, lift up his voice in a shrill and peculiar

war whoop. This startling brand of noise he pretended to have learned from a Seminole Indian, who most assuredly must have been full of bad fire water.

While making this disturbance, Hector ran to and fro in a crouching posture and rapidly patted the earth with his hand—an occult ceremonial which left no doubt in the mind of any beholder that "McGrath's Personally Conducted Tours" was about to muster and sally forth into the unknown.

Presently a window would be shoved up and the voice of Jim Stearns be heard in shouting assurance of his instant obedience to the summons. One after the other, glad response would be yelled from the windows of the remaining members, while Hector continued to whoop and perform the required incantations. Once assembled, the Personally Conducteds bunched together in the middle of the campus, hard by a lamp-post where there was light enough to enable them to discern the outline of a small metal arrow carried by the leader. This he tossed high in air; at which all hands rushed to note where it fell and in what direction it pointed.

Hector Alonzo McGrath, thereupon, produced a pocket compass and carefully marked the bearing of the arrow. If it pointed northwest, for example, the Personally Conducteds were to set out for a walk due northwest, two hours on end, no matter where it landed them and regardless of the difficulties of charting a bee-line course. The charm of this haphazard method was its variety and its cheerful idiocy.

In the manner described, Hector summoned his trusty allies one frosty night of late November and, after discovering that their route must be steered south-southwest, made comment as fellows:

"We haven't headed just that way before and I have a strong hunch we're going to find something doing. Our last expedition was kind of tame and we have had no real fun since our line of march led us slam up against that farmhouse in Westville and Bolivar Martinez insisted on our going through one window and out of another."

"I obey orders—I have been a soldier," snapped the vivacious little South American. "You told us to follow the compass, if it took us to hell-and-gone, my brave Hector. Oh, my, but it was funny when we piled into that farmhouse window and across the sitting room and out again, with nobody saying one word, and the old man with the white whiskers and the dear old lady and all the family sitting by the lamp! They were too scared to move, I guess."

"We all wiped our feet outside, so we didn't make any rough-house," said Jim Stearns. "It gave them something to talk about—varied the monotony of the farmer's life."

"All aboard!" cried Hector. "And don't you dare to fall behind, Tommy Prentice. Last time you played us a low trick by faking a sore toe and quitting, because there was a dog in that yard we had to cross."

AT a brisk gait, the Personally Conducteds set out from the campus, Hector in the lead, the compass in his fist for frequent observation and guidance. Through the city streets they were compelled to tack and make detours, keeping no more than a general direction; but, once in the outskirts, where the buildings were scattered, they sought the open road and the country fields and lanes with as little deviation as possible. It was the hope of the unexpected that lured them on—the sense of making their own trail on a region unfamiliar and mysterious in the darkness.

To strike across a pasture, not knowing what lay beyond the farther fence; to grope a passage through a belt of woodland, or walk a stretch of rail-

road track that led no one knew whither, was to make of pedestrianism an adventurous sport and a hilarious gamble. It was a game of "follow my leader" for children of a larger growth.

This expedition was in trouble as soon as it had fairly plunged into the quiet country of farms and market gardens. Hector became entangled in a barbed-wire fence and was released by main strength, his companions hauling three ways at once until, in daylight, he would have been mistaken for "the man in our town, who jumped into a bramble bush and scratched out both his eyes" *et cetera, ad infinitum.*

Not long after this misadventure, Tommy Prentice rolled down a gully into a brook, crawled out, dripping, swearing, shivering and calling the others cowards and quitters for not tumbling after and pulling him out. Nothing daunted, however, the quartet trudged onward, in hopeful quest of some adventure to make the hardships worth while.

THEY had progressed perhaps two miles, in their blundering fashion, when, at the edge of a newly plowed field, there loomed vaguely a large barn and its huddled outbuildings. Hector scratched a match and looked at the compass.

The barn lay one point off their destined course of south-southwest; but a shed to the right of it lay square athwart the path. The most successful Personally Conducted was that in which the least deviation had to be scored against the party and, with a common impulse, they moved toward the shed, intending to scale it, so long as the compass needle bade them attack the obstacle.

Jim Stearns, being tallest and strongest of the four, volunteered to boost his comrades one by one and be the last man over. He was about to toss to the roof Bolivar Martinez, the featherweight, when from within the shed there came a chorus of grunts and porcine squeals. As the Personally Conducteds mounted the roof, their clatter aroused the inmates to more clamorous protest, and pigs of all sizes voiced their intense displeasure.

Hector McGrath peered downward at the self-sacrificing Jim Stearns and admonished him, in a stage whisper:

"Scramble up, old man, and let's be on our way. This racket will rouse out the farmer and the hired man with shotguns. They'll think we are stealing the pigs. Can you blame 'em?"

Jim hoisted himself to the roof with the aid of a loose board and crawled gingerly up the slope to the farther edge, where his fellow pilgrims were lying in a row on their stomachs and gazing into a black abyss, from which arose a powerful smell of pig. Even their leader, Hector Alonzo, appeared loath to take the initiative, muttering in his own defense:

"It's at least a fifteen-foot drop from this high side of the roof, plump into the pig pen. And I'm hanged if I want to be mired in muck and attacked by a flock of man-eating pigs. We must do something pretty quick. Stopping a load of buckshot has no fascinations for me. That is more in your line, Bolivar."

No sound came from the sleeping farmhouse, whose lights had been early extinguished. The pigs were more rampageous than ever, and the voices of the infant squealers were particularly insistent and agitated.

"It is with shame that I advise a retreat pretty quick," returned Bolivar. "In my glorious republic of Oriente, where I was a captain of the army of liberation, it was a disgrace to——"

"Oh, shut up, and say it to yourself in Spanish!" put in Hector. "Come on, fellows—let's take the back track. This is no time to practice intercollegiate debating."

The baffled Personally Conducteds slid down the roof, dropped off with one jarring bump after another and stole along the edge of the field to flank the barn. Hector Alonzo was lagging behind and made absent-minded reply to the exhortations of his companions. The voice of an annoyed and suspicious pig was borne to him, faint and far away; but it must have had a message for this resourceful leader, because he quickened his pace and, overtaking the shadowy trio of undergraduates, bade them halt, while he announced as follows:

"I want to borrow one of those pigs the worst way, and lug him to the campus. Not a hair of his head shall be harmed, and I'll fetch him back to his happy home a couple of nights from now. Who will volunteer to join a forlorn hope? Don't all speak at once."

"Not until you tell us why and wherefore, you lunatic," firmly returned Jim Stearns. "I have stood for your rash deeds long enough. Somehow, the pig proposition fails to charm me."

"Yours not to reason why," muttered Hector. "See here—I am the founder and leader of McGrath's Personally Conducteds, and your ideas of discipline are pretty rocky. Do you allow your football slaves to ask foolish questions when you give an order, or does Tommy Prentice, here, submit to a lot of hot air on the diamond? If you are going to mutiny over a pig in a poke, I'll drop you from the ranks."

Bolivar Martinez stepped two paces to the front and saluted, as he proclaimed grandiloquently:

"To obey orders is the first duty of the soldier. When I was with the noble army of liberation in my beloved repub——"

"Oh, for Heaven's sake, there he goes again!" groaned Jim Stearns. "If you will chop it short, Bolivar, I'll help bag the pig. Come on, Tommy—don't be a shyster. You are too bow-legged to stop a pig, but you can lend your moral support."

Very timorously, the abductors stole toward the shed, expecting to be shot at, at close quarters; while Bolivar whispered that, if it came to a charge, he would feel lost without his trusty machete. Hector was so ardently desirous of acquiring a pig that it was voted by the rank and file to let him pick out his own porker and, despite his smothered protests, he was hoisted bodily over the fence in front of the shed and dumped into the pen. Amid an infernal clamor, he pluckily pursued a white pig, which cavorted in circles like a ghostly streak of shadow, while the spectators stood their ground and impartially praised the agility of the hunter and the hunted.

AT length, Hector Alonzo staggered to the fence, with his quarry hugged to his breast, and was hauled over, just as sounds of awakened activity came from the farmhouse. Pell-mell, the Personally Conducteds fled into the night, which was shattered by the indignant cries of the purloined pig. It was a brisk chase, with the farmer handicapped by a poor start, and he was outfooted ere his own fields had been traversed.

"That is what I call a masterly retreat," panted Bolivar Martinez, who was attached to the hind quarters of the frenzied pig. "At the battle of Rio Grande de Sol, my glorious army was attacked by——"

"Give him the whole pig to carry, Hector," said Jim Stearns, "and maybe that will keep him too busy to unload that prize declamation on us. Whew! How do you expect to conduct this march through New Haven?"

"We passed a grocery store at the crossroads coming out," explained the leader, "and we can buy a sack and tuck in his piglets as cozy as can be. If he hollers when we get to the cam-

pus, the college will think it is Tommy Prentice trying to sing high tenor with three or four drinks in him. You will be sorry you called me names when you see the finish of this night's work. If I don't stand the campus on its head between now and to-morrow night, you have permission to use me as a doormat. In the bright lexicon of H. A. McGrath, there is always something doing."

Threats, bribes and persuasions failed to evoke the secret purpose that seethed in the active brain of the leader of the Personally Conducteds and, with the pig shrouded in a gunny sack, he marched in the van until the campus was sighted. Hector Alonzo was a shocking spectacle, what with barbed-wire and pig-pen encounters; but such trifles gave him no concern and, with the air of a conqueror, he headed for his dormitory after telling his comrades:

"I won't tell you to-night, because I am afraid you might blab. But be sure to report at my room at three thirty to-morrow afternoon, when little Hector will pull off a surprise party for his playmates."

He toiled up the stairway, the melancholy passenger in the bag on his back emitting muffled lamentations, while the disgruntled Jim Stearns gazed after and observed to his companions:

"What do you think of his nerve? After we risked our lives to stand by him and his besotted pig, he won't let us in on his game. I say we go up and spank him."

"Hector has trouble to burn, with that pig in his room overnight," said Tommy Prentice. "Let him alone. He'll be sorry. Lucky for him, no tutor lives in his entry. If 'Snoopy' Morgan got wind of this, he'd be mad enough to call a faculty meeting. Let's go to bed. I'm dead tired, for one."

Hector, too, was weary; but a quiet night was not for him. He tried to barricade the pig beneath the window seat; but it was in a hysterical mood, by now, and made headlong sorties; finally taking refuge under the bed, whence Hector tried to coax it, at first with kind words; later with shoes, books and whatever other missiles came to hand. At last, he dragged a packing box upstairs from the dormitory cellar and made a corral that promised to stand until morning.

The noise of his labors drew the notice of a trio of belated roisterers who dwelt on the floor below, and they tramped up to batter on the door and demand entrance. Being told to go to, they merrily carried the door off its hinges and roared with delight at sight of the pig, which they promptly christened "Hector's new roommate." Also, they made bad jests about "birds of a feather." The morning was no longer young when Hector got rid of them and tried to compose himself for uneasy slumber.

NEXT afternoon, when the trio of Personally Conducteds convened as requested, they found Hector Alonzo haggard but undismayed and eager to place before them the following schedule of action:

"I have surely had one hell of a time with the pig; but he is getting so tame and sociable that I am really fond of him. The little beggar knows his master, already. Look at him, curled up on a hundred-dollar rug as if he owned it! Now to get down to business. The campus needs stirring up. And what is so enlivening as a greased-pig hunt? It is a bully idea to introduce the simple pastimes of the peasantry, don't you think? It helps to preserve the democratic atmosphere and traditions. My proposition is to turn my pretty pet loose when half the college is on its way to four-o'clock recitations, and the rest of 'em loafing around the campus

looking for something to do. The hue and cry will be raised in about one half of one second; and then it's: 'Yoicks, tally-ho!' I want you fellows to help smear the pig with vaseline, good and plenty."

"But won't it be tough on the pig?" asked Jim Stearns.

"Not for a minute. He'll enjoy it. And if I have him sized up right, he'll still be going strong after the whole college is run clean off its feet. Any more objections?"

"Not that it cuts any ice, I suppose; but you are going to play the deuce with the curriculum," spoke up Tommy Prentice. "Do you suppose a solitary man will show up for four-o'clock recitations after this pig hunt breaks loose? This means that about twenty professors and tutors will be after the scalp of the miscreant who perpetrated the porker."

"They can't put it up to me. I'll disown the little brute," said Hector. "The few fellows who know he boarded with me aren't going to give it away. Get busy, and let's grease him."

This was far easier said than done; but, after Herculean exertion, the obstreperous pig glistened from stem to stern and was as impossible to make fast to as a bolt of lightning. Popping him into the gunny sack was out of the question, and it was perforce decided to chase him downstairs and let him bolt onto the campus, with a running start from the entryway. Hector gazed from his window and announced:

"The populace is turning out strong. The three-o'clock recitation crowd is just coming out of the classrooms and the four-o'clock push is beginning to muster on its way to slavery. Wait five minutes more. We'll open up with a patronage of at least five hundred souls and more to come. Here, Jim—you know what the coaches say just before the eleven goes on the field to do or die for old Yale. Can't you address a few feeling remarks to the pig, to make him buck up and do his best?"

Inasmuch as the pig had just rubbed large smears of vaseline on the legs of Jim's carefully creased trousers, his remarks were vivid and stimulating. Bolivar Martinez was holding his watch in one hand and counting off the minutes.

"On your marks—get set—go!" shouted Hector Alonzo and, with that, he set sail after the pig, which dodged for the open door and scuttled down the long stairs as if the devil himself were after it. With the sound strategy which qualified him for leadership of the Personally Conducteds, Hector Alonzo McGrath bade his comrades stay where they were, explaining:

"Give him time to get under way, then we join the mob as if we were casual bystanders. It would look suspicious for us to hit the campus two jumps behind the pig."

FROM the windows they beheld the pig scamper madly into the quadrangle and veer toward the Old Brick Row. He had no more than put on full steam when a yell arose from a flock of upper classmen, perched along the fence. As one man, they leaped to earth and set out in chase.

"Good hunting!" shouted a scholarly looking sophomore, on his way to a Greek recitation, and, dropping his books, he made a bee line for the fugitive pig.

The uproar was heard by hundreds of other undergraduates, who swarmed across the campus from every side and whooped for joy as they descried the gleaming pig shoot round the corner of a dormitory and head for the open spaces. In a twinkling, as by some infernal magic, this orderly inclosure of the campus, populous with youth engaged in seeking an education, was

transformed into a bedlam of riot and shameless abandonment to the joy of a greased-pig hunt. None paused to question whence the pig had come.

Elated with the success of his thoughtful enterprise, Hector Alonzo McGrath led his comrades into the midst of the tumult in time to see the pig double in its tracks and dodge in and out of the crowd, while scores of hands strove to grasp him and dignified seniors bit the dust as they vainly dived to tackle the elusive quarry. Proof against capture, the pig twisted, squirmed and charged from one end of the campus to the other with unflagging energy, his squeals marking his course when he was lost to view in the laughing, shouting, jostling multitude.

THE tumult was at its height when, beyond the college library, there appeared a formal procession of elderly gentlemen, walking two and two—a starched and dignified company, obviously savants of some sort or other. As if hoping to find refuge and protection in such highly respectable society, the frantic pig threw his helm hard over and bolted away from his pursuers, straight at the newcomers.

The chase had so much momentum that there was no checking it and, a moment later, the elderly gentlemen, the mob and the pig were mingled helter-skelter in a swirling torrent.

Hector McGrath had slackened his gait, with a dark foreboding that trouble was brewing, and he was inwardly disquieted to overhear some one just behind him say, in horrified accents:

"Those must be the delegates to the convention of the American Ethnological Society. They were to be shown over the college, this afternoon, by a faculty reception committee. What—oh, what will they think of us?"

Bolivar Martinez giggled, nudged Hector, and thoughtlessly blurted:

"That makes your gallant pig a grander success than ever, eh? You did not expect to bust up an ethnological convention, I bet. Congratulations!"

Hector made a warning gesture and, with intuitive surmise that Bolivar's foolish speech had been overheard, spun around, to find himself facing Tutor "Snoopy" Morgan, whose dour expression, sarcastic habit of speech and reputation for secretive investigation had won him his unlovely sobriquet. The tutor was eying him with such evident interest that Hector blushed and looked very ill at ease. He was about to move rapidly away when Mr. Morgan detained him, with the dry inquiry:

"Do I gather that you are responsible for this disgraceful scene, Mr. McGrath? May I add my congratulations?"

"You are a poor hand at eavesdropping, if you think I have lost any pigs," was Hector's hasty retort. "Martinez was cracking one of his South American brand of jokes. You have to read 'em backward to guess the answer."

The smile of Mr. Snoopy Morgan was not genial as he replied: "If you choose to deny it, I may have to look into the matter a little more——"

He left the sentence unfinished and moved away, with such eager haste that Hector looked behind him and saw the pig bearing down, no more than three lengths ahead of the roaring mob of collegians, who had left the ethnological society in a condition of the most appalling wreckage. In order to simulate an interest in the chase that he no longer felt, Hector lunged at the slippery prize, which tacked sharply to the right, with a defiant squeal, and found its path blocked by the spare figure of Tutor Snoopy Morgan.

Hard pressed, and seeing no avenue of escape on either side, the pig tried to dash between the tutor's legs, with disastrous results. The unfortunate in-

structor was bowled over by the assault, and so neatly were his feet whisked out from under him that he smote the earth with the crash of a falling tree.

It was by this one act that the rampant pig won not only the respect but also the affection of several hundred jubilant beholders. Mr. Snoopy Morgan had long been the most unpopular instructor in the college; and with one accord the pursuit halted, while these godless youths cheered the pig until they were hoarse and forgot all about hunting him farther.

Hector Alonzo McGrath was inwardly delighted, but the responsibility for this devastating pig had suddenly become complicated. With voluble sympathy, he helped to set the tutor upon his pins and tried to brush his rumpled garments, the while condemning the pig hunt as a scandal and an outrage. Mr. Morgan was not to be so easily rid of his dark suspicions, however; and, although he was almost speechless with wrath and humiliation, he eyed Hector with so malevolent a glance that the youth felt cold shivers chase up and down his spine. The pig had fled from the campus to parts unknown, while the student body spontaneously fell in behind the limping figure of Snoopy Morgan and followed him toward his rooms in Durfee Hall as a mock guard of honor.

"Now, you have stacked up trouble for yourself," murmured Jim Stearns, as he caught up with the uneasy Hector Alonzo. "Snoopy Morgan will never get over this. He will run you to earth, if it takes a leg. For Heaven's sake, forget the pig and let him go his way."

"I borrowed that pig and I intend to lug him back to his home," stoutly returned Hector. "I won't break my word, even to a lowly pig. Wasn't he the sporty boy, though! He deserves to be rewarded and I am going to hot-foot it on his trail right now. He was going strong up Elm Street when he streaked off the campus. No, I won't bring him back to my room—of course not. Snoopy lives in the next entry; and he is full of unholy suspicions, as it is."

"You are at least seven kinds of an ass," grumbled Jim, "but I like your loyalty. I'll help you find the pig. Come along. It's getting too dark to hunt him without searchlights."

They hurried into Elm Street and had no difficulty in picking up bulletins of the quarry, which was reported as galloping along the trolley track with undiminished speed and evading capture for block after block. At length, Jim and Hector spied a crowd of urchins in front of a corner grocery and there came to their ears the welcome sound of a still defiant squeal. The German grocer, hot and angry, was holding the boys at bay, while his fat wife talked soothingly to the pig, which was blockaded in an apple barrel. Hector pressed to the front and claimed ownership, buttressing his argument with a dollar bill. The grocer was easily persuaded and agreed to keep the pig in his cellar until eight o'clock in the evening.

AFTER supper, the other Personally Conducteds asked Hector to abandon the "pig proposition;" but he stood by his guns and, wishing to run no risk of implicating them, swore that he would drive out alone to the farm. Although damning him heartily for his quixotic stubbornness, they watched him depart by way of the German grocer's.

A drizzling rain was falling and the sodden air was cold and searching. When he passed out of the lighted city streets, Hector was swallowed up in rayless darkness, which made his progress a game of blindman's buff. As he drove his car along the muddy coun-

try road, the conscientious patron of the sport of pig hunting reflected dismally that he ought to be studying hard for Snoopy Morgan's philosophy examination two days later. The subject was one in which Hector was likely to come to grief; and the tutor was not apt to be biased in his favor, after the happenings of the afternoon.

After blundering off on the wrong road for what seemed hours and hours of rain-soaked misery, Hector retraced his course and ultimately reached the edge of the plowed field, beyond which lay the home of the borrowed pig. He shouldered the heavy sack and stumbled across the oozing furrows, the rain pelting in his face.

"This looking for a dark barn on a pitch-black night in the middle of a million-acre field would have Henry M. Stanley guessing some," he said to himself.

After walking steadily for a mile or more, Hector became convinced that he had missed his target and lost his sense of direction. The rain grew wetter and colder, the pig heavier and heavier, and the darkness more bewildering. Turning right about face, Hector soon ran into a fence and began to feel his way along it, in the hope that it must lead to the barn. After a long while, a black object loomed vaguely just ahead of his nose and he took it to be the outline of the pig's domicile. Warily he pushed forward; and, climbing the fence, bumped into his car. With a hopeless sigh. he dropped the sack, leaned against the fence and observed to himself:

"I won't give it up—not yet. Come on, you dead-game little sport of a pig. You and I are going to make a Yale finish, or we drop in our tracks."

The fates relented at sight of such heroic endeavor and the rain ceased to fall; so that Hector was at length able to discern a twinkling light which he thought must be a window of the farmhouse. After another heartbreaking march through the mud, he found the barn and stealthily fetched a circuit which brought him up alongside the pig pen. Carefully dumping the pig over the gate, he fled into the night; and, as he heard its joyous squeal of greeting, he said to himself:

"The other pigs will call him all kinds of a liar when he gets right down to telling them how it happened. I hope he says a kind word for me. I did all I could to give him a good time."

IT was after midnight when Hector drove slowly into New Haven, shivering, benumbed and weary beyond words. After putting away his car, he dragged himself toward the campus as if he were walking in his sleep. Rain was again falling, and he bent his head and pulled the collar of his mackintosh higher. Without looking up, Hector turned the corner of Durfee Hall, bemused with wondering what might be the sequel of the latest tour of the Personally Conducteds, and more or less befogged with drowsiness.

Mechanically he turned into an entryway, felt for the stair rail and climbed heavily to the unlighted corridor, where he fumbled for the doorknob, turned it and walked into the sitting room, vaguely surprised that he had forgotten to snap the lock fast.

Vainly searching his pockets for a match, Hector cautiously advanced to the center of the room until his fingers slid along the edge of a flat-topped desk. There ought to be a box of matches beside the inkstand; he remembered leaving them there. But, after knocking a pile of books to the floor and upsetting a bottle of mucilage, he gave up the quest and pulled open the right-hand top drawer, in which he was accustomed to store a reserve supply. Instead of matches, his groping hand closed on a pile of

sheets of paper, which he angrily threw on the desk ere he proceeded to claw out more of them, scolding under his breath at the careless negro, who took care of his rooms, for shifting things without warning.

At length he found a loose match in the bottom of the drawer, lighted it and stood staring down at the desk in blank amazement. His flat desk was covered with green baize; this top was red. Catching up one of the sheets of paper from the litter he had made, he saw that it was filled with printed matter. Without looking about the unfamiliar room, so great was his consternation and fright, Hector comprehended that he was looking at the senior philosophy examination questions, which were to be given to the class two days later. He knew that he had blundered into the wrong entry of Durfee, and was in the rooms of Tutor Snoopy Morgan.

Instantly awake to the seriousness of his incredible stupidity, Hector was on the point of panicky retreat when, from the adjoining bedroom, there came the sound of some one in hasty motion and instantly a gas jet leaped into brightness. Caught in the act, an examination paper unwittingly clutched in his fist, Hector Alonzo McGrath stood blinking beside the desk, while Tutor Snoopy Morgan glared at him from the bedroom door. It was a melodramatic tableau.

EVEN though the attenuated instructor was clad in blue pajamas, he was the most terrifying sight that Hector had ever gazed on; and he had not pulled himself together to attempt explanation when Mr. Morgan addressed him, with a mirthless chuckle:

"Nothing to be said, is there, Mr. McGrath? Stealing my examination papers? Thought you would prepare yourself in advance and I would not miss one sheet of questions? I suppose you heard I expected to be out of town to-night. Won't you sit down?"

Hector's honest face burned dull red, and he was breathing hard as he leaned against the desk and stared helplessly at the sneering tutor, whom he yearned to brain with the nearest chair. Then, in desperate haste to flounder out of this trap of circumstantial evidence, yet too indignant to be coherent, the youth exclaimed:

"It was dark and rainy, and I was thinking of something else—and I came up the entry next to mine—and I couldn't tell the difference in the dark. Your desk is just like mine. I was looking for matches. Of course, I never dreamed of stealing examination papers. You'd believe the worst of anybody. I didn't know anything about your being out of town to-night. What difference could it make to me?"

Mr. Morgan rubbed his thin jaw, critically surveyed the excited, trembling Hector and replied, without heat:

"Whatever you say will be reported to the faculty meeting that must take action in the matter. Um-m! Of course, I shall have to state the facts and recommend your expulsion from college. Odd, isn't it, that I forgot to lock my door? It has never happened before. If you have any further defense to make, I advise you to tell me what you are doing out of your rooms at one o'clock in the morning in such atrocious weather. If you have been with friends, or any legitimate errand has kept you up so late, no doubt you can readily bring proof to that effect. I am willing to overlook your reckless language and to give you every chance to make your explanation something more than the flimsiest farce. You are in a rather hopeless predicament, speaking frankly, Mr. McGrath."

Hector thought of the pig, of the spectacular upset of Mr. Snoopy Morgan before the rejoicing college, and again of the pig. In fact, he could

think of nothing else. How could he tell his accuser where he had been and what he was doing out of his rooms at one o'clock of this stormy morning? Then, too, there was the ethnological society to be recalled with another shudder. The whole faculty must be up in arms about the pig. To confess to the pig—to tell the damnatory truth—was to run grave risk of expulsion, without clearing himself of this latest crime. Dumb and miserably distraught, Hector reflected:

"I stand to lose, both ways. It is out of the frying pan into the fire—and repeat. If I keep mum, the faculty is sure to think I was caught with the goods on in Snoopy's rooms. If I blame it on the pig, he will be more sore-headed than ever. This is no time for hasty words. It is up to me to get under cover and do some hard thinking with myself."

Mr. Morgan, suspicious by nature, naturally mistook Hector's embarrassed silence for tacit confession of guilt, and took occasion to remark, with biting severity:

"If you had time to hide one of those examination papers in your pocket before I discovered you, it is really worthless, I assure you. The examination will be postponed until another set of papers can be prepared. Good night, Mr. McGrath! I presume we shall see each other at a faculty meeting before the end of the week."

"There isn't a man in college who will take any stock in your cock-and-bull story," cried Hector, retreating toward the door. "My record is my best defense, and you can bet your last cent I wouldn't swap it for yours. That pig showed what the fellows think of you."

"Oh, yes! About that pig," murmured Snoopy Morgan. "I may have something to say to you about that pig, before long. Was it——"

But Hector Alonzo McGrath had slammed the door and was tramping downstairs.

HE made straightway for Jim Stearns' rooms, and aroused that sleepy athlete; for he could not bear to be alone with his troubles overnight. For his part, Stearns had been prompted to join the Personally Conducteds by a dutiful hope that he might be able to keep the impetuous Hector clear of disastrous escapades; and he sat up in bed and listened with lively sympathy until the tragic tale was told. Then he commented:

"This is the worst I ever heard. Of course, none of us are going to believe that you tried to swipe Snoopy's papers, but lots of men have been hanged on evidence that was a good deal weaker. The faculty will have to back him up, I suppose. How *did* you come to do it? Trust you to make a bullheaded blunder, Hector; but this takes the blue ribbon."

"Confound it, Jim," cried Hector, peeling off his dripping raincoat and filling his pipe. "I was half dead and, with six hallways in a row and all looking exactly alike, it wasn't so hard to make a miscount in the dark. But I didn't come here to hold post-mortems. I am in a perfectly horrible fix. Snoopy can't prove the pig proposition; but he is going to put it up to me and I simply can't lie out of it without hating myself. I might get off with two or three weeks' suspension on account of the pig; but that cuts no figure if I am going to be expelled, neck and crop, for burgling Snoopy Morgan's desk. I can't really see how you can dig up any advice; but it's kind of comforting to talk over the details of my execution with you."

Jim pondered long and earnestly, convinced that his luckless chum was indeed betwixt the devil and the deep sea; and what counsel he had to offer was in the nature of a reprieve.

"The dean is laid up in bed, Hector, and he won't be in his office for another week or ten days. He is a bully friend of yours, and you won't be fired until he has gone over the evidence and talked to you. A heap of things may happen between now and then. If you are hauled before the faculty committee, keep a stiff upper lip and spar for time. Snoopy Morgan will try to rush matters; for he isn't any too popular with the younger professors and they will want to give you a fair show. Now go to bed and keep your nerve. You are in the condemned cell, all right; but your friends will be working for you, and we will aim a few mass plays at Snoopy."

"It is all undeserved," sighed Hector. "All I tried to do was to give the campus a new branch of athletics. Here the faculty and the students are clamoring for more minor sports, that will enlist the interest of the college at large and give all kinds of men wholesome exercise. Why, the pig gave five hundred men any amount of wholesome exercise—and look where it lands me! Well, I guess I need Snoopy's philosophy course, from soup to nuts, to keep me from going clean batty during the next week or so. Come over to the room and hold my hand when you have nothing else to do, Jim."

THREE days passed and the summons Hector dreaded came not. The dean was reported as rapidly convalescing, and in his absence a special meeting of the disciplinary committee of the faculty was held. Tutor Morgan was in attendance. This much leaked out, and Hector Alonzo McGrath suffered torments of apprehension and uncertainty. He was unable to study to any purpose; his recitations were such pitiable failures, and his "grouch" so continuous and depressing, that on Saturday afternoon Jim Stearns tactfully suggested:

"Let's run down to New York and go to a show to-night and get a change of air. I think I need it, and I am sure you do."

Hector agreed, with a wan smile; and the pair posted off to catch the next express train. The condemned youth began to brighten and, by the time they had dined, he was fast recovering his normal spirits. Before going out for the evening, they returned to their room on the fifth floor of the hotel.

Jim did not bother to close the door while he brushed his overcoat and hat; and presently Hector saw a slender, stooping man about to enter a room almost directly across the hall. The light was dim, but that figure was appallingly familiar; and as this other guest pushed the electric-light button just inside his doorway, Hector knew that he was looking at Mr. Snoopy Morgan. Hastily slamming his own door shut, Hector called to Jim:

"The bogy man is over yonder! He just went in. Yes, it is. What is Snoopy doing here? Do you suppose he tracked me? I feel like having an attack of heart failure—honestly."

"Nonsense! It's a coincidence. He has a girl in New York, so the fellows say. It is no stranger than your ambling into his rooms, and I have a hunch that he has been delivered into our hands. Luck is bound to turn, Hector."

"We might kidnap him and put him to the torture until he promises to withdraw his case against me, Jim. I have thought of trying something like that, but I never dreamed he could be so accessible. Can't you think of some plan to lash him to the mast? My brain has ceased to work since the night I took the pig home."

Jim grinned and seemed to be in no hurry to go to the theater. Whatever purpose may have begun to simmer in his own mind was diverted by the

sound of a spirited altercation in the hall. At the door of a room just beyond that occupied by Tutor Morgan, a blue-shirted hotel porter was being roundly berated by a woman of dubious age, who might have been visiting the city for a shopping tour. Her chin was determined, her expression acidulous, and her voice sharp-edged, as she went on to say:

"The bolt on my door must be fixed to-night, or I shan't sleep a wink, porter. Yes, I am afraid of sneak thieves, after all I've been reading in the New York papers. A lock is no protection against their skeleton keys and jimmies and pincers. You go right back to the office and tell the manager what I say, or send him up to me."

"But the carpenter has gone home, madam, and there ain't anybody on deck to do odd jobs like this," the collegians heard the patient porter reply. "You don't need no bolt. The lock is all right. You're perfectly safe without locking your door at all. The night clerk will shift you to another room, if you ask him."

"No, he won't! I'm tired out and my trunk is all unpacked and I intend to stay put," she snapped at him. "You go right down and tell the manager what I think of him and his hotel. And you come back with a new bolt."

"The devil I will," muttered the porter, as he retreated to the elevator.

Jim Stearns looked at Hector McGrath as if a glimmering inspiration was struggling to take shape, but he could not make it tangible. Hector stared at the ceiling and knitted his brows, trying to bring into focus the idea which, as by telepathic impulse, had presented itself to him. Both had Snoopy Morgan in mind; and it was Jim Stearns who, with a flash of positive genius, cried:

"Get him into the wrong room! There is the nubbin of the great idea, Hector. Here is everything all set and ready to make Snoopy the hero of a first-class scandal. I can't work it out, but I feel it coming. Do you catch on, at all? If the dignified Yale tutor should happen to make a mistake and try to get into that high-strung female's room, she would raise a roar that could be heard from here to the Battery. She wouldn't listen to any explanation—she wouldn't! I can just hear her yelling for the police, the fire department and the national guard. Brace up, Hector, and tell me how to get started."

With a shout of delight, Hector kicked over his chair, wrung Jim's hand and, lowering his voice to the pitch of the true conspirator, exclaimed excitedly:

"Then we dash to the rescue, and are properly horrified—eh, Jim? Snoopy tries to tell us how it happened, and we remind him of what he said when I blundered into *his* rooms. What put it into your head?"

"I was looking at those nickel-plated numbers on the room door, as I came up the hall," confessed Jim. "I hankered to pry off two or three of them as souvenirs, make the class numerals of them and stick 'em on my wall at college. They come off dead easy. That is how I got my cue, just now. If we could take the door numbers off Snoopy Morgan's room and that of the peppery female just beyond him, and exchange them! Understand? Ten to one, when he comes in late to-night, he will look along the row of doors in the hall until he finds his number and then he will try to get in. It looks promising to me."

"I say we cut out the theater," declared Hector, his eyes sparkling. "You are all to the good, so far, Jim; but you don't go far enough. Snoopy has got to get *into* that wrong room. Then there will be Hades to pay, sure enough. And I can fix it. Harrington, the night clerk, used to work in my

father's office, and he will do anything in the world for me. My credit is good as far as I want to go. That shows how I stand with the hotel. I will borrow a pass-key from Harrington, on the bluff that I have lost the room key. He'll give it up without a doubt. And after that suspicious and irritable dame across the way has turned out her light and gone to sleep, I'll sneak over and very softly unlock her door—and *leave* it unlocked, Jim."

"Hector, you are a wizard when it comes to fool enterprises!" Jim chuckled. "Snoopy will squint at the door number, try his key, find it won't work, and then he'll unexpectedly push the door open, amble in and—well, it ought to be a red-hot little surprise party. To make it complete, a reporter ought to be present."

"What's the mattter with telephoning to the *Planet* office and trying to get hold of Witherspoon? He was a twenty-one man, and he hated Snoopy Morgan most sincerely. He was flunked in philosophy two terms running. If he thinks there is a chance of getting revenge, he will come up on a dead run. This is undoubtedly the most brilliant scheme we ever hatched. Push the button for a waiter. You are not in training at present."

Shortly after this, the observers beheld, through a crack of the door, Mr. Morgan, of the Yale faculty, hurry toward the elevator. He was immaculate in evening clothes and crush hat, and the sight of a jaunty boutonnière caused Hector to whisper:

"It *is* a girl, all right, Jim. He won't be back for some time. Witherspoon will be up between nine and ten. Keep your eye on the lady's transom. She hinted to the porter that she planned to turn in early."

Before the *Planet* reporter arrived to join the conspiracy, Hector had stolen into the hall, while Jim did sentry duty. Deftly and silently the metal numerals were pried from two doors and quickly transposed, so that "71" now gleamed where "73" had been. This much accomplished, the borrowed pass-key was employed in another stealthy sally and the trap was set. Young Mr. Witherspoon, of the *Planet,* appeared a little later and was delighted with the ingenuity of the pair of undergraduates.

IT was shortly after eleven o'clock when the trio heard the elevator door clang open at the fifth floor and the sound of a quick footfall in the long hall. Jim Stearns, tallest of the trio, was standing upon a chair and furtively peeping through the transom from their darkened room. He saw the tutor slacken his gait, scan one door after another, halt when he came to the figures "71," and fumble with the knob while he poked the key into the lock. After some delay and an impatient gesture, this deluded guest put his knee against the door—and it swung inward. His entrance might have been quieter, and he even stumbled against a chair, which upset with a loud crash as he groped to find the light switch.

To the three young men waiting across the hall there came a piercing feminine screech—an incoherent appeal for help, to which they gallantly responded without an instant's delay. Mr. Morgan had turned on the light an instant before she found voice, and he was discovered in full flight, with never a glance at the distracted occupant of the room, who, having pulled the counterpane over her head, was so totally eclipsed that the most rigid tenets of modesty were not jarred by the invasion. The virtuous young gentlemen who had rushed to the rescue fell upon poor Mr. Morgan, at the threshold of the room from which he was trying to escape, and dragged him into the hall.

It was Jim Stearns who exclaimed, on a tone of pretended dismay, as he released his grip on the captive's neck:

"Holy smoke, fellows—it is Mr. Morgan, of Yale! Who would have dreamed of such a thing? This is awful! Our own philosophy teacher! Handle him gently and get him into our room—quick! This must be hushed up. He must be drunk. He couldn't do such a thing sober. Here, Hector—knock on the lady's door and tell her the villain is in safe hands, and head off the watchman and the guests. Don't let the police get wind of this, for the sake of the college."

By means of bribery and diplomacy, Hector persuaded the few curious onlookers to disperse; and he so far reassured the lady who had been so frightened that she consented to leave the offender to be dealt with by his captors.

Rudely hustled into the undergraduates' room, the dazed tutor was pushed to a chair, while Jim and Hector stood looking at him, sorrow, surprise and indignation written upon their ingenuous features. If the victim smelled a plot, he was given no chance to assert himself; for Stearns said very gravely:

"It is awfully fortunate that we Yale men happened to be so near, sir. We don't want this scandal to get into the newspapers, if we can help it. Mr. Witherspoon was in the hotel and, of course, he is anxious to write a front-page story for the *Planet,* with big headlines like 'Yale Tutor on a Toot,' or something like that. Breaking into a lady's room sounds pretty bad. Do you want to interview him, Witherspoon? He may want to make some kind of a statement, although he hasn't a leg to stand on."

The pallid tutor bit his lip and his trembling fingers picked at the edge of his coat. The whole episode was like a horrid dream. Witherspoon produced a notebook and solemnly awaited a statement. With a laugh that was hysterical, the tutor cried:

"Ha, ha! A college joke, I presume. Very good, but I—I—why, of course, it was a mistake. I got into the wrong room—that is all there is to it. You do not intend to let it get into the newspapers! My God, it would kill my career! You don't know what you are doing!"

"You got into the wrong room, did you? That explanation doesn't go," observed Hector McGrath. "Did you believe *me* when I told you how I had got into the wrong room? Did you take down what he said, Witherspoon?"

Jim had slipped out of the room for a few minutes. Now he returned and nodded to Hector, who went on:

"Come out here, Mr. Morgan, and show us how you got into the wrong room. 'Preposterous'—that is what you told *me.*"

Meekly the tutor followed, while Jim fell behind to whisper to Hector:

"I have changed the numbers back again. Tell him to try room No. 71, which is his right door."

With the air of a man whose senses could no longer be trusted, Mr. Morgan halted in front of "71" and, after sharp urging, tried the key, easily turned it and walked into a room unmistakably his own. He stared at his belongings, scattered just as he had left them, and sank limply into a chair, a hunted look in his eyes. As if the situation were beyond words, he had nothing to say when Hector addressed him haughtily:

"There is *no* explanation, Mr. Morgan. You are caught with the goods on. How about it, Witherspoon? Have you got enough for your story?"

"Yes, and it's a corker. Much obliged. Glad I happened to be on hand. I think I can dig his photograph out of my college album."

The agitation of Mr. Snoopy Morgan was so distressing to witness that Hector was moved to announce the terms on which a truce might be arranged. He said sternly:

"I don't like to hit a man when he is down. You are convinced that an innocent man can get into the wrong room, are you not? All right. You tell that to the faculty, withdraw your case against me, and apologize to the other professors for your unfounded suspicions—and we will call it quits. Your most unhappy adventure in New York will be forgotten. It stops right here, among the four of us. We are deeply disappointed in you, but that can't be helped—human nature is so uncertain."

THE surrender of Tutor Morgan was sudden and unconditional. With a slim hand pressed against his brow, as if trying to stop his brain from acting like a whirligig, he murmured, in broken accents:

"I may have been mistaken. Yes, I will so report. My evidence will not be placed before the dean. In my own case, I swear to you——"

"Oh, there was the matter of a pig!" broke in Hector. "The pig is a dead issue, also. He is part of the bargain, Mr. Morgan."

"Including the pig," muttered the tutor.

Jim Stearns brought these peace negotiations to an abrupt conclusion by dodging in from the hall to say:

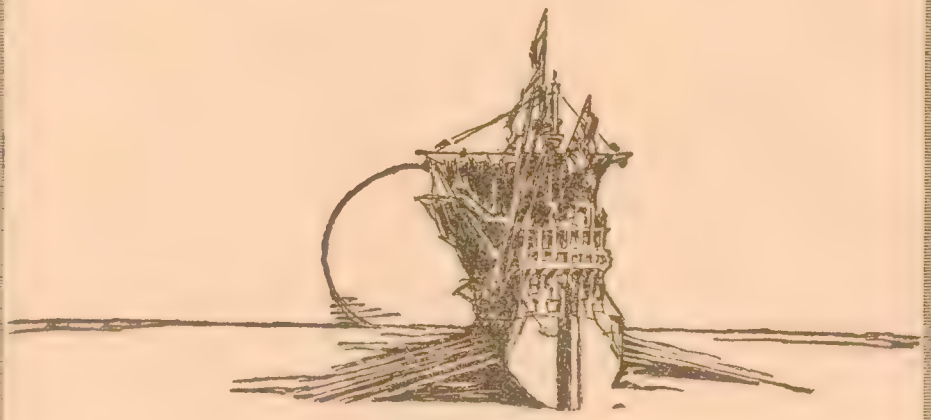
"The angry dame from Willimantic is due to emerge and demand to see the prisoner. Make a quick sneak, Mr. Morgan. No—don't stop to pack your clothes. You hit the high places for the Leamington Hotel, and we will send your things down to-night."

In this sudden fashion vanished Mr. Snoopy Morgan, a man who had been brought to see a new light, who had learned, by dint of harrowing experience, that things are not always what they seem. No sooner had he fled than Hector Alonzo McGrath and James Montgomery Stearns linked arms with Mr. Witherspoon, of the *Planet,* and convoyed him toward the café in order fittingly to express their gratitude for his loyal support. He bemoaned the loss of what he called a "bang-up story," but he was forced to admit the truth of Hector's summary, delivered as they later set out in search of food:

"We Yale men have got to stand by each other. And I am certainly grateful to you two fellows. But I'll bet I'm not one bit more grateful than that dead-game little pig. I am glad I stayed with him to the finish—aren't you, Jim?"

OUR DAILY BREAD

ALTHOUGH America is the home of the trick breakfast food, a government inquiry shows that we eat enough bread to keep over one hundred and forty-one thousand men and women busy in our baking plants. New York leads the States in the number of bakers employed—over twenty-eight thousand. Down at the bottom is Nevada, with less than a hundred It seems that in the eastern and northeastern States people like the kind of bread that you buy over a counter, but that in the West and South they stick to the sort that mother used to bake.



A Call to Ships

By Harry Kemp

OH, they put forth from Joppa, from Sidon, and from Tyre
As they sought all merchandise that kings could desire;
They laded deep bottoms with perilous freight,
And their lands grew rich and their people grew great;
There were purple sails to westward and oars that dipped and drew
A shining path for commerce and unguessed revenue.

Then they hailed from Athens, from Corinth they put forth,
And the Greeks grew great from the ocean's worth;
Eastward pushed their biremes with their double banks of oars,
Westward oared their triremes to unknown shores.

Rome reached from her Tiber; Rome knew sailing next,
With her thousand galleys all the oceans vexed.
Carthage rose, her rival; Carthage lost her sea:
Rome still knew her mariners and her sovereignty!

Venice, left in marshes, from the salt began—
Venice, new and feeble, learned her ships to man;
Caravel on caravel voyaged, daring far,
With no chart to guide them, trusting to a star.

In the open ocean placing still their pride,
Sidon, Athens, Carthage richly justified,
Rome, and sea-built Venice; Spain, that sought for gold,
Sailed into a new world, from a world grown old.

Wealth of Aztec cities, ingots of Peru!
Then a northern island woke to empire too:
Drake and Walter Raleigh, vivid still to fame,
Queen of many oceans, England is her name.

With the past behind us; with to-morrow, vast
From a growing future greater than the past,
We, who had our ships, too, shall we now forget
That on floating waters stands our empire yet?
Heir to all the oceans, shall we quite forgo
Those fleets of heeling clippers that trod the seas to snow?
Whalers, daring frigates, trim ships of the line,
Shall we to forgetfulness our ocean days resign?

The Blackmailer

By Frederick Niven

Author of "What's Bred in the Bone," "Pr-pr-presence of Mind," Etc.

Blackmail is a parasitical mushroom growth which, in living, slowly kills the source of its subsistence. To rid the host of its deadly presence, it is necessary to tear it out by the roots.

WHEN Reg Baston was a young man he must have been very strong, or, as they say in those parts where he had settled in his elderly years, "pretty skookum." He was one of those men who appear to have been made in two squares, the lower one cut in the middle to make legs, and he had a tremendous fist. One could not help but notice it, because of that way he had, when telling stories of the old days, of taking his pipe from his mouth and, elbow on chair arm, unconsciously exhibiting it, upraised for scrutiny, clutching the pipe bowl.

He had many stories of the old days, was far from mute about his past, unlike many men with something to hide in the early chapters of their lives. It was evident enough that he had been something of a wild youth; that fact leaked out in some of his yarns, with an apologetic grin toward his wife, if she was present. Not that she troubled much about that; the Reg she had met in her, and his, middle years was good enough for her. She was very fond of him, and he of her, and both were devoted to their daughter Blanche.

It had always been his dream, not exactly to retire, but to get a hotel somewhere and oversee it. And here, on his own hotel veranda in Skeena City on the Pacific coast, his stories were of regions that had for their centers Fort Benton and Fort MacLeod, far off among the Rocky Mountains' eastern foothills. It was principally to old-timers that he told these yarns, old-

timers to whom they were not wild, fantastic, they having others to match them. And it was a very happy way to end one's days, sitting swapping stories on one's own hotel veranda.

"Were you ever up North on the plains?" somebody asked him once. "I came out to the coast myself across the plains, by Fort Edmonton and through the Yellowhead Pass."

"Oh, I hardly knew the country up so far north," said old Reg. "I only once went from Fort MacLeod to Fort Edmonton. That was with a bullock team. No, I don't know it up around Fort Edmonton and Fort S'katchewan."

There was nobody to notice his slurring pronunciation of Saskatchewan and wonder if perhaps he did not know it better, wonder if perhaps he had not been nearer it than he admitted. Down by Benton they were more likely to say "Saskatchewan." This slurring, this saying "S'katchewan," was somewhat local, an abbreviation by those who had to say it often.

No, nobody noticed that. Nobody, indeed, noticed any faintest indication, slightest hint, that in Reg Baston's old days there might have been any story wilder than the normal wildness of those times. But there was. This somewhat loquacious elderly man had one story that he always dreaded lest he might talk of it in his sleep. The thought of illness that might come to him some day, despite his hardy life, occasionally bothered him, not because of fear of sickness but lest he might get a high temperature, delirium, and babble forth that bit of his past.

OFTEN, sitting on that hotel veranda, biting his pipe, he would gaze out on the waters of the Pacific, or at least the Inside Passage, and congratulate himself that he had not spent ten years in jail, as one of those party to the affair had done. He would stare out away beyond the promontory where stand totem poles of the Indians—red men so different from his old plains Indians that, seeing them, he might almost imagine himself in another hemisphere—and even perhaps, in his own way, thank God for mercies, for letting a fellow off his desserts, off what was "coming to him," now and again.

He thought that perhaps, after all, he had been more sensible to make his semiretirement here, instead of in Vancouver or Seattle, cities he had at different times thought of selecting. By all accounts a good number of old-timers from the plains, who had made good, did not spend the last years of their lives in a pleasant bungalow in a town near their one-time range, but came right out to the coast—Portland, Seattle, Vancouver, favorite places for them. Yes, Skeena City, he decided, had been a good choice.

And then the big boats took to calling at his chosen Skeena City, not only the tramp coasters, but the tourist steamers. Skeena City Indian basketry became quite a trade. The steamers stopped a couple of hours to allow passengers to go over the bench and see the Chugwater Falls and the Marble Cañon. Reg, on the veranda, found himself developing a tendency to pull his hat over his eyes when strangers came along. He was glad he had not gone to a bigger place. He would have been pulling his hat over his eyes all the time there! People said a big city was the place to hide in if one wanted to hide, but he doubted it.

He was so happy and contented that he did not want to have that happiness and contentment spoiled. Over twenty-five years before had occurred that little affair in the Northwest, that tragic affair in which a policeman of the old R. N. W. M. P.—from Fort Saskatchewan—had been killed. Reg had lit out. He had got across the border and on the southern Montana ranges, with a new name, safely evaded the law. But

the thing still hung over him. Pshaw! He puffed it aside. It was all too long ago! A fellow wouldn't "get away with it" all that length of time and then be traced. That would be too cruel.

Then he glanced up at the sound of a footfall. A man out of his past, whom he had no desire ever to see again, had arrived. The newcomer sat down beside him and, without any greeting, casual as though he had seen him an hour before, spoke.

"What was the idea of changing your name and taking your mother's name?" he inquired.

He shot his arms out, drew the sleeves from his wrists to make them comfortable, hitched his trousers.

Reg took the shock well, with only a long, slow breath to relieve the clutch at his heart. He replied to the question with another, his voice oddly hard and level.

"How do you know it is my mother's name?" he asked.

"Oh, I've got a memory. I recall once you mentioned that your mother was one of the Bastons."

Reg nodded slowly.

"Yes, I've got a long memory," repeated Arthur Savage.

"So it seems," said Reg, produced his tobacco sack and filled his pipe, the better to appear at ease.

"What was the idea?" asked Savage, again. "There's a kind of tradition that one's mother is kinda sacred. It is so in all the stories. Queer—taking her name after you were mixed up in a killing so that you had to beat it."

Reg pressed the tobacco carefully down into the pipe bowl.

"Admitting that I was," said he, "a man might take it being sure he wasn't going to smirch her name, turn over a new leaf."

"Um!" said Savage, and smiled.

He did not look as if he had been keeping any name unsmirched. He looked hard, cruel and dissipated.

"I just wondered," said he. "It was the name that brought me here. That's all. I saw it in a paper advertising your place, *Prop: Reginald Baston,* and—I wondered. Thought I'd just stop over from the steamer and inquire, for old-time's sake. And you've been keeping the name unsmirched, then?"

"I've had nothing against me for twenty-five years, or more," replied Reg.

Again there was a thoughtful pause.

"All the more reason, then, Reg," said Savage slowly, "that you wouldn't like the old story to leak out."

Reg put head on one side and with puckering eyelids considered this man out of his past.

"See here!" said Savage, "I got my baggage check in my pocket." He produced it. "Will I stop over here a spell with you or would you prefer I went aboard again?"

IT was at that moment, just as Reg was preparing to say, "You can do anything you please!" that Blanche came in from the sidewalk. He was very fond of her. He had hopes for her future. A blot on her father's name might spoil her chances. The sight of her then, passing into the hotel, checked the abrupt response on his lips. He let her go indoors before he spoke again.

"Is this blackmail?" he inquired, then. "Do you think you've got something over me? I've got a cross-action coming, you know, if you blab."

"Oh, you have, have you? The trouble is that you'd have a job to get witnesses that I was in it at all."

Reg's eyelids drooped to hide his eyes, lest they showed his mental agreement to that. He knew what Savage said was true. Savage had been the kingbolt of that cattle stealing in the Northwest that had ended in a shooting scrape for his harum-scarum tools; but he had been very careful. He had

been the organizer, the middleman, the chief profiteer, but strategically more safe than any of his men in the field.

"And how," asked Reg, as if on his toes, stretching his legs lazily out before him in a further attempt to seem at ease, "how about you being able to get evidence over me, then?"

"I've still a little note you sent me, telling me it had fizzled and that a man had been shot," replied Savage.

Reg gazed into distance and the past.

"I didn't say who had shot him," said he.

"Didn't you? Well, even supposing you didn't! I don't say I hold hanging over you, but I hold a stretch in prison all right. Don't you run away with the idea that time eases you, either. Why, man, you're in the old police files all right—looked upon as more or less of a bad debt, maybe, but it could be turned up. It wasn't a cow-puncher that was shot, remember. It was a policeman, and that would make them all the happier to get you."

"I didn't shoot him!" exploded Reg, in a low growl of a voice.

At that spontaneous outcry Savage looked sidelong at him with interest. He had often wondered which of the three, Guy Rutherford, Jack Harkness, Reg Baston, had shot that policeman. Guy had been traced and swore he was not guilty, though he did not know which of his companions had done it. He had served ten years in prison. From the point of view of a blackmailer, he was no quarry. Savage had put him in the discard as a means toward additional increment. Sitting here in Skeena City beside Reg, however, sounding him, he felt entirely otherwise regarding Reg, in fact, very hopeful.

"And what reason would you give for being so long in laying information?" asked Reg, striking a match on the under side of his chair arm and lighting his pipe. An onlooker might have thought they were having an entirely casual chat.

"Why, man, the reason would be that I didn't know till now where you were!" was the answer.

The steamer siren blew to announce that in a quarter of an hour it would be off. And Reg almost weakened. It would be pleasant to see Savage depart forever on that boat.

"You'd implicate yourself in laying information," he fended, as a last shot.

"No, siree. I had my tracks hid at the time and nobody could implicate me now. Besides, if you don't come across, I don't mean to do more than mail an anonymous letter to them to give your whereabouts. See?"

"How much do you want?" asked Reg.

"Five thousand. It's a trifle, but I'll let it go at that. Nome didn't give me a fortune this time, so I'm quitting it. I don't want to get back in Seattle broke. That's all."

"And if I give you this when do you call again?"

"Never."

"Never?"

"No. I'm quitting the North. It was only by accident I noticed your advertisement in the paper at Whitehorse and saw the chance to get out with some money in my pocketbook. I thinks to myself, 'I'll drop off and see if it's the old identical Reg who used to lift the cattle for me and——' "

"And you all safe at home."

"That's it!"

"Well," said Reg, "I ain't got the cash in the house. I'll have to give you a check."

"No, you won't! You've just time to pop across to the bank. Come on!"

Reg drew once and again on his pipe, unaware that it was extinguished. He looked very grim. He thought very hard. But Savage helped him to an end of his thoughts.

"Oh, well, if it's all the same to you,"

he said, sitting back easily, "if I stop over for a spell, then it is all the same to me."

So Reg said, "Come on," and rose and together they marched over to the Bank of Commerce. In the portico, Savage counted the bills of his hush money slowly, while the seconds hurried on.

"Well," said Reg, "I guess you know what I think of you. If it hadn't been for you, I'd never have been mixed up in the rustling. You ran it safe for yourself then, and we ran all the chances. It's me that should be blackmailing you!"

The express wagon clattered down to the wharf with some baggage; the motor bus from the falls-and-cañon trip honked past.

"So long!" said Savage. "I guess it eases the man in a cleft-stick to empty his mind!" With only that cynical remark in response to Reg's expression of opinion of him, he moved away.

Baston stood watching till he saw Savage mount the gangway and go aboard.

"That's that!" said he, and turned home, his shoulders slightly more bowed than usual.

SAVAGE, however, did not keep his word. Within a year he was back again. That had been a queer year for Reginald. The ease of his life, the happiness with his wife, his happiness over his daughter, seeing her growing up with "her head screwed on right," had become doubly precious to him. It would be a tragic thing if this bubble of his elderly contentment burst. He thought often of the phrase "a fool's paradise" and hoped, almost prayed, that Savage would keep his word and neither blab nor return to blackmail. He consoled himself by the thought that the police had never had any photograph of him, only descriptions; and the description of a quarter of a century before would little serve for him then.

Apart from Savage, Reg was safe. There was no policeman in the world, he thought, who looked over descriptions as old as that, to carry them in his mind when studying the faces going past. So far as the police went it was forgotten—"a bad debt," as Savage had phrased it.

Baston was actually thinking of Savage on the day of his return, though that was no coincidence, for he often thought of him, worried about him, just as he worried lest he might talk in his sleep or, falling ill, blab all in delirium.

The boat had come in. The hotel motors and jitneys began to spin past uptown from one of the northbound steamers. He could see his own tout on the wharf, with one or two people clustered round him, pointing out this and the other baggage.

Gazing thus into the middle distance he had missed seeing a man walking, and carrying no more than a small suit case, till he was close, just below him on the sidewalk. And the man was Arthur Savage.

"So he's come back!" Reg thought, and his eyes narrowed to slits.

Would Savage be true to his word and ignore him? What was he doing in Skeena City? Would he go to another hotel? Reg had the answer to these thoughts quickly enough. Arthur turned in at the Hotel Skeena, strolled slowly up the five broad steps, nodded to Reg where he sat on the veranda and marched indoors. Baston just had a glimpse of Orrock, his manager, coming to the portico to relieve Savage of his suit case.

Now what was going to happen? Reg wondered. He took the pipe from his mouth and tapped his teeth with its stem. The casual nod that Savage had given him inferred, perhaps, that there would be no more attempt at blackmail. Perhaps he was going out

to a new excitement that had sprung up in the Coast Range, just back from Skeena City, and would sleep in the hotel only a night and then be gone.

"Well, I'll leave him to my manager," thought Reg, "treat him just as an ordinary guest in the house."

But he did not feel at ease. With lowered head, grim, chin pressed upon his necktie, he sat thinking, looking down at the wharf, at the big steamer with its two red smokestacks, at the little cloud of gulls that screamed and swooped when refuse was cast out from the galley. There he sat, tapping his teeth with the pipestem. Across the street sat two old Indian women, swathed in their gaudy shawls, behind a spread blanket on which were set out their baskets.

ALL these things, Reg noted abstractedly. Yes, that was the plan: Savage was merely a passing and unknown guest at his house—and that was all. That would be his attitude to him.

When the lunch gong rang, Reg went in to eat, Mrs. Baston and Blanche meeting him in the lobby. They were looking over the register book to see if any one had come in on the steamer from south.

"I wonder how many John Smiths there are in the world," said Blanche, "how many there are in Seattle alone!"

John Smith, Seattle! So that was what Savage had written in the book. Again Reg's eyes puckered in the way they had when he was deep in thought. An alias! Well, if Savage tried for any more hush money there might be a counterattack in the fact of this alias. Why should Arthur Savage, one-time stock dealer, headquarters, Glendive, become John Smith of Seattle? Had he, perhaps, had games more crooked than that old one of intermediary between certain back-East stockmen and cattle rustlers of the plains who worked at his instigation?

A deep man, that Savage! He could inveigle young harum-scarums of the range into rustling, and delivering to him, stolen cattle, and then inveigle other harum-scarums, or absolute green boobs, who knew not what they were doing, into shipping them at the shipping points.

"If I'd been a little older, when he put the game up to me," thought Reg, "I'd not only have turned it down but called him down. The dirty dog!"

He opened the door of the dining room. Mrs. Baston and Blanche walked in and went to their own table. Arthur Savage, alias John Smith of Seattle, did not so much as bat an eyelid—as Reg might have phrased it—on their entrance. Reg sat facing him across the room, and all seemed perfectly satisfactory. Once or twice, glancing at Savage, he observed a twist to the corners of his mouth as of a smile over some private consideration.

"Thinks he's throwing a scare into me," mused Reg.

Still, in some belief, even at his age, that a word passed is a word passed, though it be a rogue who passes it, he was inclined to the opinion that Savage would trouble him no more.

Little did he understand the man. Savage stayed a week, paying no attention to any one. He stayed a fortnight. He stayed a month. He stayed two months, making no inquiry of the manager if he would care to have a payment then.

"I wonder if that man Smith, from Seattle, is good," said Mrs. Baston, to her husband once, "or if he'll eventually skip? I see he doesn't even pay for his cigars, gets them put down on the bill."

"Oh, yes, yes," said Reg. "I guess it's all right. Maybe he's just looking around in Skeena City to see what chances there are for starting up some business."

"His looking around," said Mrs. Bas-

ton, "seems to be chiefly in a big chair in the lobby. He looks crooked to me."

Reg thought it over. It was not the custom in such hotels to have guests with but one small grip stay on indefinitely without payment. A monthly settlement was certainly expected; some hotels expected weekly payment. Savage must have known that. The fact that he was not pressed for payment would make him think that Baston was scared of him.

"Dang it!" Reg thought to himself. "I should have been firm from the word 'Go,' ought never to have let him get away with that five thousand." Then aloud: "Say, Orrock, I think you'd better just put it gently to that man Smith, from Seattle, that the house would like a payment."

"All right."

Reg felt better after that. He went up to the grocery store, if not exactly with an easier mind, with a happier mind. After all, he had always been one to "take a chance," and it irked him to feel subdued and furtive in his own house because of the presence of Savage.

His business transacted, he went over to the post office. It was a new building and, in some gesture of magnificence, instead of being content with granite steps, the builder had put in marble ones—with marble from the cañon that the tourists went out to admire. These steps were all right on a dry day; on a very wet day they were not too bad; but when a little sea mist drifted, or there was a drizzle, they were truly four treacherous steps.

Reg slipped on them, came down crack on a shin, swore, rose in pain, but with his wonted grit. He was unaware that his leg was broken and stepped out—and went down again. So he was carried home with a compound fracture.

That left the matter of whether John Smith of Seattle was to be dunned or not in the air. Orrock had done his part.

"Say, Mr. Smith," he had gently remarked, "I thought I might just mention to you that guests staying in the house a while generally make a monthly settlement."

John Smith had slowly lit one of his credit cigars.

"You might see what reduction you can give for guests staying a spell," he had countered.

But Orrock did not trouble Reg with that. A man with a compound fracture is not in the mood to discuss cut rates or anything else. The manager thought the matter could remain in abeyance a day or two. Mrs. Baston, however, asked what Smith had said, or done, in response to a request for disbursement. On being told, she instructed Orrock what terms to ask.

"Oh, all right. I'll see about it," was all that Smith said, when the message was delivered and the cut rate quoted.

SO Mrs. Baston, going into the dining room, drew herself up in rather stately fashion at sight of Savage, alias Smith. All unaware she precipitated matters with that stateliness.

Savage was enjoying himself hugely. He had a permit at the liquor store, a bottle in his room; and one evening, after Orrock had suavely again reminded him of the cut rate, the whimsicality of it all made more whimsical by a jolt or two, he went along in his stocking soles to the little bedroom in which he had discovered Reg slept.

Flat on his back, staring at the ceiling, Baston had his gaze deflected by the stealthy opening of the door. And there was Arthur Savage. Stealthily he closed the door and walked over toward the bed, his eyes with a red glitter in them, twinkling.

"Say, Reg," he said, "it was all right when you were around. You under-

stood the proposition without having to be told. But the danged thing is that neither your wife nor the manager understand it. You see, I haven't put them wise!" He gave a chuckle. "They keep dunning me."

Reg lay there looking at him, eye to eye.

"Well?" he said, at last.

"Well, you see how it is," said Savage. "I don't want to have to tell your missus. She wouldn't like it. And I was just figuring out that everything would be all right if you was to give me the money to pay."

Reg's head nodded slowly up and down on the pillow packed behind it.

"I see," he said. "How long do you figure on staying here, anyhow?"

He had had to veil his eyes for a moment. A terrific rage had filled him at that threat to tell the story out of his past to Mrs. Baston.

"Oh, I could stick around until you're up," replied Savage. "They don't need to know, you see. You give me the money, and I give it to them. It's only taking it out of your right pocket and putting it into your left one. And then, when you're better——" He nodded, left the rest unspoken.

"What?" said Reg, who wanted to know exactly what was left in air.

"Well, we could discuss another little fee," replied Savage.

"Oh, we could, could we?"

"Yep." Savage grinned. "And then," he said, "I could go on back to Jack Harkness. I've found where he is. I guess he was the one that did the killing, too. Fancy me getting track of him as well as you, and the police not doing it! He's very well fixed. He ain't running a hotel, but he pays my board for me for quite a time now and then."

Reg plucked his chin slowly between thumb and finger, his eyes blazing.

"Plenty of time," said Savage. "You needn't worry about it just now. If you just give me the money to pay the hotel bill, that'll keep your wife all right."

Reg's eyelids narrowed together; his lips came close. Then he raised his head.

"Well," he said, "I can't get up for it. But I tell you what." He lifted a hand and pointed downward with a finger. "There's a tin box under the bed here, with enough cash in it for that. Just rake it out, will you?"

"Now, that's very sensible of you," said Savage, stooping. "I got a feeling from looking at them that not only your wife"—he bent under the bed, caught the handle at the end of the tin box and began dragging it out—"but that innocent daughter of yours, if I was to let out the little story of——"

It was at that point, that mention of Blanche, that the sudden culminating rage seized Baston. He had been leaning back, propped on the pillows, an arm raised, the back of his troubled head held in a cupped palm. And in that rage he flung his arm out and down and crashed the massive fist upon Savage's temple.

Savage lay motionless. Reg looked over the side of the bed at him. Then he put his hand down and felt the face. With difficulty he eased himself slowly down the bed and got his hand upon Savage's heart. It did not beat.

REG sank back again on the pillows. The electric-light bulb and socket had been brought from the middle of the room and affixed to the head of his bed by a string. He switched the light off, loosened it from the string and let it swing back. There! That was all that was necessary. He had heard some one dragging, furtively, the box from under his bed, had quietly felt upward for his light to switch it on, then found that it was not in place and had smashed out in the dark at the unknown burglar.

He stretched his hand out and pressed the bell push. Nobody came. He pressed it again. Then steps came hurrying.

"That you, Orrock? That you?" said Reg. "Say, there's somebody broken in here, trying to do a bit of burglary, and I can't reach the light. I just punched him a wallop and then rang the bell."

Orrock switched on a flash light that he carried in his pocket when on night duty, reached up to the hanging electric bulb, turned it on.

"Why," he exclaimed, "it's that man Smith from Seattle! Your wife was saying only to-day she was sure he was crooked."

"Yes, crooked all right," said Reg.

"Gosh! He's—he's dead! Guess I'd better leave him lying just as he is with his hand on the box till I get the police."

"Yes, I guess you better. Then they can see just how it happened."

As Orrock departed to phone to the police office for the chief to come over, Reg Baston ran the palm of that great hand of his across his forehead, wiping away cold beads of moisture which had gathered there.

"I wish," he muttered, to himself, "I knew where Jack Harkness is, so I could drop him a line saying he'd be interested to know I'd just heard of the death of Arthur Savage. It would kind of take a load from his mind to hear, I guess."

THE OBLIGING MR. COOLIDGE

ROBERT W. BONYNGE, former member of Congress from Colorado, unlimbered the heavy guns of his oratory in behalf of Calvin Coolidge in 1920 when the latter was a candidate for the vice presidency. He did his speaking in Massachusetts, and one evening he and Mr. Coolidge were billed to talk from the same platform. Bonynge is a whale of a table thumper in a political fight and knows all the tricks of holding a crowd of voters, making them laugh one moment and the next drawing them out to the edges of their chairs in their absorption in his argument. But, knowing that the vice presidential candidate was the prize attraction that evening, he took steps to save himself from possible humiliation.

"Governor," he suggested, on their way to the hall, "I wish you'd let me speak first this evening, so that I'll be sure of an audience. I'm afraid that, if you speak first, the crowd will leave the hall as soon as you're through."

"You're right," Coolidge assented, with exaggerated solemnity. "That's usually what my speeches do to them."

AMERICANS are beginning to realize that there is a difference between free speech and speech freedom.

A Chat With You

DAY by day in his attic studio, under a cold north light, the poor artist works at a painting. He sells it for what he can get for it, pays a few bills, and goes back to paint another. In the meantime, while Brown, the painter, is busy, the art dealer is not idle. He sees that Brown "has something," which is to say that Brown sees things in an individual way and has enough technical command to set forth his visions on canvas so that other folk may see them. He tries to create a market for Brown. He explains to collectors the finer points in his work and prophesies a great increase in selling value for his paintings. And as Brown keeps on painting, the dealer buys the paintings until finally he has quite a collection of them. Then he begins to sell them and the prices go up.

* * * *

YOU think that this helps Brown a lot. But not so much as you might suppose. In so far as the market value of his pictures is concerned, Brown finds himself under two heavy handicaps, the first being that he is still alive, the second being that he has to continue painting in order to stay alive. For, when one tries to jack up the price of a Brown painting, the customer replies:

"Why should I pay so much for this canvas? Brown is still painting. He is getting better every day. He is reaching a finer mastery of his subject and style, a more subtle technique, a greater suavity. I will wait and get one of the newer Browns at a lower price."

In the course of time a good many of Brown's pictures are bought and sold, each time at a higher price. It does not help Brown much, for he keeps on painting new ones in order to live, and the new ones, better and better all the time, keep his market down.

* * * *

THE problem is how to raise the market value of Brown's paintings to something near their true worth. The dealers cannot do it so long as Brown continues to paint. At last Brown solves the problem magnificently, all by himself. He dies.

Now that there is to be no longer a stream of Brown paintings coming from his attic studio, the market takes a bullish tone. The very fact that Brown has died makes him more interesting. Alive, he was just a painter with a style. Dead, he becomes a master. Articles about Brown and his work begin to appear in the art magazines. Rich collectors begin to pay higher and ever higher prices for his work. Browns turn up in unexpected corners. A grocer has one that he took for a bad debt. Now he sells it for a thousand. Imitation Browns turn up, only to be indignantly exposed by the experts. People going through private galleries inquire:

"Can this be really a Brown? It isn't a copy!"

Finally, Brown having been dead a sufficient number of years, his paintings find their way into the great public art galleries of the world and Brown has arrived. He has left a fortune in paintings behind him, but he has never enjoyed it nor will his family, if he has left any behind.

THE author's case is different. He gets royalties on every book sold. If he writes for magazines and increases in fame, the fact that he keeps in production only increases his value and his rewards. This is what the printing press has done for him, and a monument to its inventor should be raised by a society of grateful authors. The talking machine has done much the same for singers. Had there been no talking machines, Caruso, having lost his youthful strength and voice, might have died in indigence, save for the fact that people could still hear his voice through a machine and were willing to pay for it. Those who decry modern inventions as being inimical to the arts would do well to consider this.

* * * *

WITH a book publisher, there is still another set of circumstances. He goes to the expense of making the plates and getting out the first book of a promising author. He is lucky if he breaks even, for first books that make successes are few and far between. Later on, the author becomes famous—and now behold another miracle! The first editions of the author's old books begin to increase in value and booksellers who happened to have them left on their hands, as well as secondhand dealers, reap the profits. One book that cost three or four dollars ten years or so ago is now quoted at fifteen hundred. And the author is still alive. This sort of thing is almost as good as Florida real estate. The author gets none of this unearned increment nor does the publisher. It all goes to outsiders.

There are other queer things about the money side of authorship. Walter Hines Page, late ambassador to Great Britain, wrote many letters to the president. He never expected them to make money, he just wanted the president to read them. Now that he is dead, it is said that his widow has received four hundred thousand dollars in royalties from the book containing them.

* * * *

THE time seems to be at hand when early numbers of successful magazines will be sold at a premium. No day passes without our receiving requests—and some of them most urgent—for back numbers. We cannot supply anything earlier than January, 1925. Outside of our file copies, we have none. Some of our readers have, however, and may care to realize on them. To help the people who want back numbers, we will start an exchange department. If you want any especial number, write to Exchange Editor, POPULAR MAGAZINE. And if you have any you wish to dispose of, write. We will print all communications. The earlier the number, in a general way, the greater its value, although some numbers, on account of certain stories, command a higher price than others. The real "first edition" of many books since famous is in some old number of POPULAR. And there are other stories in back numbers, unattainable elsewhere, which many would hate to see lost.

A smashing story of the oil fields

BRIGHT BLUE *By* ROBERT H. ROHDE

is the complete book in the March 7th issue of

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